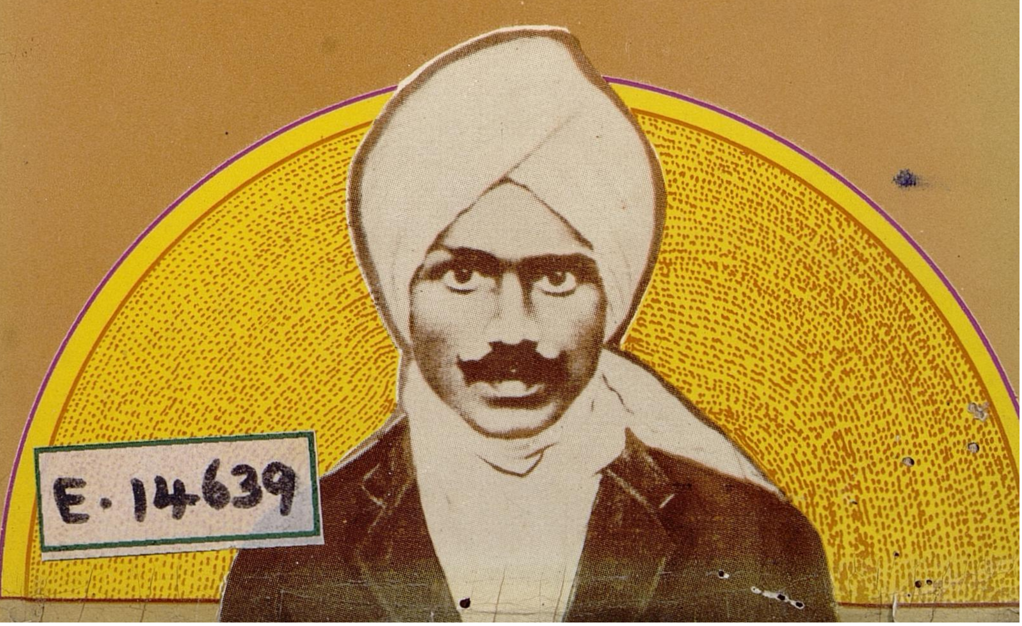
SUBRAMANIA BHARATI

Chosen Poems and Prose



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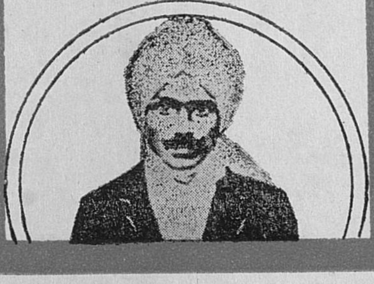
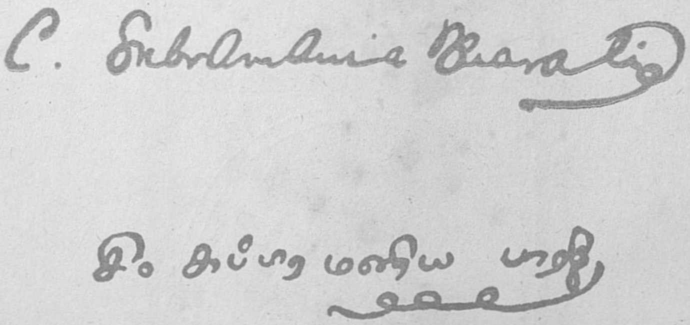
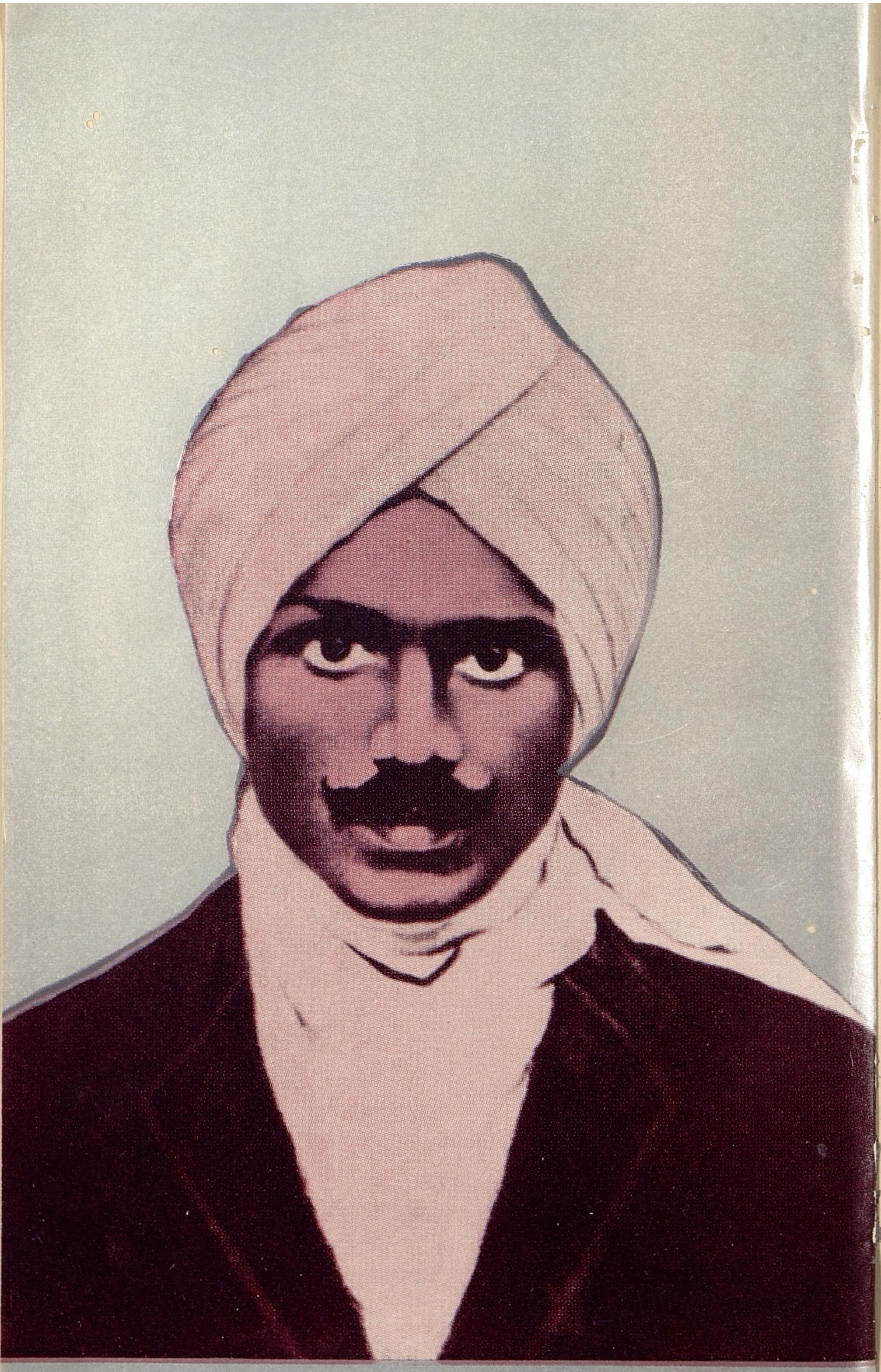




Facsimile of the signatures of C. Subramania Bharati in English and Tamil. The initial "C" stands for "Chinnaswamy", his father's name.



C. SUBRAMANIA BHARATI (1882-1921)

SUBRAMANIA BHARATI

Chosen Poems and Prose

English renderings of a selection from the Tamil writings of Subramania Bharati

General Editor

K. SWAMINATHAN

PUBLISHED BY

The All-India Subramania Bharati Centenary Celebrations Committee

Sponsored by the Government of India, Ministry of Education and Culture (Department of Culture)

NEW DELHI

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FOREWORD

Subramania Bharati (1882-1921) had the unofficial title of Bharati* conferred on him by competent scholars when he was hardly 12. He has been recognized as the greatest Tamil poet of the twentieth century and has gained a distinguished and permanent place in Indian history as an ardent patriot, a lover of freedom, a social reformer, a passionate exponent of national integration and the prophet of a new human order.

Though Bharati belonged to the deep South and wrote only in Tamil, his lofty spirit transcended geographical boundaries and he reflected the whole composite culture of Bharatavarsha, which in turn reflected the universal elements in our human nature.

It is only befitting that in honour of this national poet of universal significance the Government of India in the Ministry of Education and Culture (Department of Culture) set up early in 1982 an All-India Subramania Bharati Centenary Celebrations Committee for organizing functions all over the country and abroad. At the instance of the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, I have had the privilege of being the Chairman of the All-India Committee.

Besides year-long celebrations in Tamil Nadu organized by the State Government and other institutions and special functions in other States, the programmes sponsored by the All-India Committee included a national seminar in Madras and an international seminar conducted in New Delhi by the Sahitya Akademi, cultural programmes by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, release of special coins on National Integration, which was very close to Bharati's works, by the Ministry of Finance, and a concluding function in Delhi on January 10, 1983, when rich tributes to Bharati were paid by the President and the Prime Minister of India.

But the most enduring homage one can offer to an eminent poet and ardent patriot is to make available his writings to a

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* Embodiment of Saraswati, Goddess of Learning

vast world who cannot read him in his original tongue. The All-India Committee is therefore bringing out in English and Hindi a comprehensive selection from Bharati's verse and prose pieces. This work of selection, translation and publication of the volume was entrusted to a Sub-Committee under the Chairmanship of Professor K. Swaminathan, Chief Editor of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.

It is true that no selection from the vast and varied writings of Bharati can satisfy all critics and no translation can satisfy even the translator. However, I find that the selections here give heart-warming and soul-uplifting glimpses of the wealth of Bharati's world.

The All-India Committee as well as the readers owe thanks to the Chairman and members of the Sub-Committee and to other helpers who have done an excellent job in preparing this substantial Volume representing the verse and prose of the poet-patriot, Subramania Bharati.

NEW DELHI
February, 22, 1983

(KAMALAPATI TRIPATHI)
M. P.
CHAIRMAN
All India Subramania Bharati Centenary Celebrations Committee
Government of India
Ministry of Education & Culture
(Department of Culture)
Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-110001

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Director, Institute of Rural Management, Anand

SUB-COMMITTEE FOR BHARATI CENTENARY PUBLICATIONS

At the first meeting of the All-India Subramania Bharati Centenary Celebrations Committee held in New Delhi on March 22, 1982, it was decided to constitute a Sub-Committee, with Prof. K. Swaminathan as the Chairman, to identify the works of Bharati that should be taken up for translation and publication in Hindi and English. This Sub-Committee consisted of:

Professor K. Swaminathan — CHAIRMAN
Chief Editor, The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi

Professor S.V. Chittibabu — MEMBER
Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University

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Mr. C. Visvanathan — ,,
Brother of Poet Subramania Bharati and compiler and earliest publisher of Bharati's works

Dr. Saalai Ilanthiraian — ,,
Tamil Scholar and representative of Delhi Tamil Sangam

Dr (Miss) K.A. Jamuna — ,,
Hindi Department, Jankidevi Mahavidyalaya, New Delhi

K.S. Sundaram 'Aadavan' — ,,
Tamil writer and Assistant Editor, National Book Trust, India

L.S. Rengarajan — SECRETARY
Deputy Director, Publications Division,
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi,
and a Tamil writer.

NOTE TO THE READER

This Selection from Mahakavi Subramania Bharati contains two parts—one consisting of poems and the other of prose items. A chronology of events in Bharati's life finds a place at the end.

In Part I, the first few words of the Tamil original have been reproduced in Roman script at the end of each poem. The name of the translator is mentioned in full at the first occurrence. Later, the names are indicated by initials only: A.S.R. (A. Srinivasa Raghavan); K.S. (K. Swaminathan); K.S.S. (K.S. Sundaram 'Aadavan'); M.R. (M. Ramaswami); M.S. (M. Srinivasan); N.B. (N. Balasubramanian); P.N. (Prema Nandakumar); P.S.S. (P.S. Sundaram).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The primary credit for this publication goes to the Chairman and Members of the All-India Subramania Bharati Centenary Celebrations Committee which appointed the Publications Sub-Committee (For names of Members of the two Committees, *vide* pages VII and VIII).

We also owe thanks to the Ministry of Education and Culture (Department of Culture), Government of India, for placing at our disposal a generous grant for the publication.

Besides those whose translations have been included in this Selection (names given at the end of each item), we acknowledge the ready permission accorded to us by publishers/editors of the books *Poems of Subramania Bharati* (Vikas Publishing House and Authors Guild Co-operative Society), *The Voice of a Poet* and *Bharathi in English* (Bharathi Tamil Sangham, Calcutta), *Agni and Other Poems & Essays* (A. Natarajan, Madras), *Jnana-ratham* (Tamilnadu Government), *Poems of Subramania Bharati* (Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi), and *Bharati : Patriot, Poet, Prophet* (New Century Book House, Madras) for reproducing some of the translations from their books. Mrs. Rajammal Mahadevan was kind enough to consent to our using the English translation of *Jnana-ratham* done by her late husband years ago.

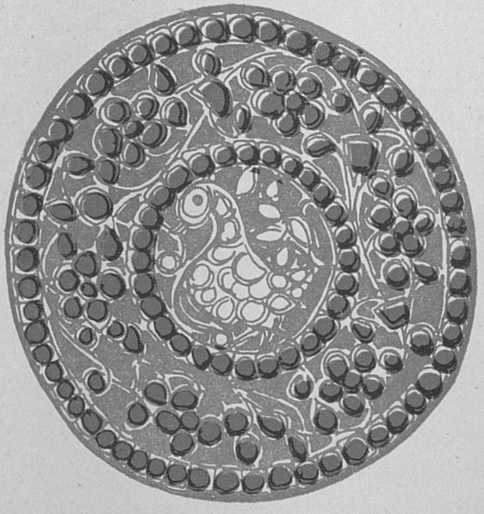
Mention must be made of valuable advice and detailed assistance given to the General Editor, by N. Balasubramanian (Director, Joint Cipher Bureau,

Ministry of Defence) and K.S. Sundaram 'Aadavan' (National Book Trust, India). Bharati's younger brother the late C. Visvanathan had been giving useful information on many doubtful points till a few days before his passing away on 17th July 1984.

The entire work of book-production, layout, liaison, correspondence and co-ordination has been handled by L.S. Rengarajan, Secretary to the Sub-Committee.

The cover design and one inside colour drawing are by R. Sarangan, New Delhi, and most other line drawings are by Maniam Selven, Madras.

The National Printing Works (Times of India), New Delhi, have done a neat job in time.



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Bharati with his wife facing p. 428

INTRODUCTION

In his brief working life of two decades, Subramania Bharati (1882-1921) as poet, prose-writer, journalist and patriot, blazed a new trail in Tamil literature and in the thinking of the Tamil people. He combined profound knowledge of and admiration for the eternal elements in the ancient Tamil tradition with an eager, forward-looking acceptance of the ideal of human unity and universal love.

In the course of his evolution from "Shelley-dasan", as he described himself in his nonage, to "Sakti-dasan" (devotee of Sakti, goddess of Energy), Bharati reflected the great change which transformed a British dependency into a self-reliant republic.

The range of Bharati's poetic inspiration is amazingly vast: There are his poems on patriotism and national regeneration, hymns to the various deities of the Indian pantheon, philosophical poems which make a direct descent from the great Upanishads, poems on nature, ecstatic outpourings on Sakti, emotional songs on Krishna and narrative poetry.

Bharati was not only a great poet, but one who opened an altogether new chapter in Tamil literature. A mastery of varied cadences, free use of folk music

tunes, a reaching toward the conversational idiom, the freshness of his images—these are the gifts that heralded a new era in Tamil literature. And no subsequent poet or writer of stature in Tamil has been able to escape Bharati's influence. The most popular poet of the next generation proudly took the pen-name "Bharatidasan".

Bharati's devotional and philosophical poems, inspired chiefly by Krishna, the embodiment of *prema* or love, and by Sakti, the embodiment of Energy or Power, are "great poetry for all times" and entitle him to his place as "Amara-Kavi" (Immortal Poet).

Life Sketch

Subramanian was born on December 11, 1882, in Ettayapuram in Tirunelveli district of the then Madras Presidency. His father Chinnaswami Iyer was in the service of the local zamindar or chieftain. Subramanian's mother died when he was an infant. The father wished his first son to become an English-educated officer or engineer. But the boy took little interest in such "bread-winning" studies and failed in the Matriculation examination at the end of his high school course.

But, even during school days he had created a stir among students and teachers by his spontaneous gift of versification. At 15, he was married to 7-year old Chellammal. He was then provided the sinecure job of reading daily newspapers to the local chieftain.

About this time, the title "Bhārati" was conferred on him by a gathering of poets at a court function. Henceforth, literary circles knew him as Subramania Bharati, or just "Bharati" (embodiment of Saraswati, goddess of Speech).

This idyll in his home-town was short-lived. Within a year, his father passed away, leaving the family in straitened circumstances. Bharati moved to Benaras to be with his aunt there. The two years he spent in Benaras brought about a great change in his outer personality and inner vision; he gained a sound knowledge of Sanskrit, Hindi and English; passed with credit the Entrance Examination of the Allahabad University; wore a thick-set moustache and cultivated a swagger in his walk; and read and enjoyed the English Romantic poets, especially Shelley.

In search of livelihood, Bharati went back in 1901 to Ettayapuram, where he taught Tamil in a high school for a short period. When Bharati was 22, he came into contact with G. Subramania Iyer, editor of a leading Tamil daily, *Swadesamitran*, published from Madras. The young man was invited to join the daily as a sub-editor. His fluency and felicity as a translator enabled him to bring to the Tamil public the inspired utterances of Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Soon the rebel in Bharati drew him into the vortex of Indian politics. His original articles in his inimitable style espousing "extremism" were read widely. The next step was the transformation of poetry by Bharati's

use of Tamil into a powerful instrument for the expression of modern ideas and for rousing the pride and patriotism of the common people.

The movement against British rule in India gained a new momentum with the partition of Bengal in 1905 and engulfed the whole country. The 'moderate' *Swadesamitran* could not accommodate the fiery writings of Bharati. So he left it to join a new Tamil weekly *India* and threw in his lot with the extremist elements in the Indian National Congress which the British Government were trying to put down by arrests and imprisonment.

To avoid possible arrest, Bharati in September 1908 fled to Pondicherry which was then a French settlement in South India, and he continued to edit from there the weekly *India*. Then followed a period of grim trials and tribulations under the constant surveillance of the British and the French police. But there was ample recompense for these sufferings in his friendship with Sri Aurobindo, V.V.S. Iyer, Subramanya Siva and other patriots who too had sought refuge in Pondicherry. Though Bharati experienced moments of depression (from which he sought relief in opium), poetry continued to be "the anchor of his purest thoughts, the nurse, the guide, the guardian of his heart, and soul of all his moral being".

Bharati came out of his self-exile on November 2, 1918, and was promptly arrested and kept in police custody for 24 days. However, on the intervention of

some eminent public workers, he was conditionally released, and was back in his native district Tirunelveli. His "extremism" had somewhat mellowed by then and he fell under the spell of Mahatma Gandhi. It was at this juncture that his old paper *Swadesamitran* welcomed him back to Madras. He lived in Triplicane, close to the Madras beach, free for a while from abject poverty.

But soon came the end. In an attempt to befriend the temple elephant at Triplicane, he offered as usual a coconut to the animal, unaware that it was in rut. Struck down by the mighty trunk and thrown aside, he suffered injuries. Though he was promptly rescued and taken to hospital, he lay seriously ill for a few days and passed away peacefully on 12th September 1921 at the age of 39.

Patriotic Songs

It was as a poet of freedom and patriotism that Subramania Bharati initially won instant popularity and established rapport with the people of Tamil Nadu.

Though he was but a propagandist in verse, an improvisator of simple songs in furtherance of prevailing public causes, the proportion of genuine poetry of high literary value is, even in "Desiya Geetangal" (national songs), astonishingly high. Such poems gave voice to the anguish of the Tamil multitude and their longings for a better future. It is a thousand pities that so many of his dreams for India's social regeneration still remain unfulfilled.

Gandhian Era

The Gandhian era has aptly been described as the "heroic age" of Indian politics. But, before this era and separated from it by the four years of the First World War, was a less chivalrous and more gnawing "heroic age" which was dominated by "extremists" like Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Chidambaram Pillai and which gave to the French pocket Pondicherry the enviable status of a sanctuary for patriotic fervour as well as for poetry and religion.

Of both these heroic ages, Bharati's was the most authentic singing voice and of the later a most powerful operative force.

The transition from radical terrorism to Satyagraha, the recognition by the country that Mahatma Gandhi was more essentially Indian than its earlier heroes, was paralleled by Bharati's own inner progress from politics to pure art and yoga. The lines "Love thine enemy, heart of mine"[1] (provoked by an Intelligence Department official) were Englished by Bharati himself in September 1915. In verse after verse and in earlier articles too Bharati extolled Gandhiji as the preacher of a new *Gita,* and this while Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant were still alive overshadowing the little brown Bania fresh from South Africa. In a marching song sung a dozen years before the Dandi Satyagraha, Bharati says:

[1]Vide pages 76-7.

Sword, spear and dagger, bow,
mace and missiles—
all these are weapons for fools.
Truth, renunciation, love are the arms
of the spirit,
wielded by great ones, godly, immortal.

And Bharati ends with these words the pentad[1] on Gandhi :

Shunning the way of war which is
But murder on a massive scale,
You chose a method much more effective,
The path of dharma prepared by seers
And servants of God, satyagraha,
Unfailing, fruitful, for bringing to Bharat
A future bright, and to the world
Forgetfulness of deeds of hate.
May this good dharma live for ever.

Vision of "Bharata Mata"

Bharati belongs to the central tradition of Tamil literature. In no sense is he a freak or a rebel. "Wind and fire and the wide expanse of heaven—compounding these together, our Tamil poets make their sweetest songs", he says, and applies the dear, familiar words and figures and tunes to the live new themes of today. If liberty and Mother India and Mother Tamil were new additions to our pantheon, so in their times were Siva and Sakti, Kumaran and Kannagi. The true poet exploits and, with the willing collaboration of the people, expands his country's mythology. And he and his

[1] *Vide* pages 42-3.

people together, in some golden epoch of history, create new gods for love and worship and service. In Bharata Mata, the real merges in the ideal, history and geography in vision—for verily the name of our Beloved is music; holy her mountain, river and city; and her drum-beats proclaim the triumph of Truth and Righteousness. It is this readiness and aptitude for personifying the abstract that enables the poet and the people to worship the country as Bharatmata.[1] As Bharati says:

She has three hundred million faces
But one sole life, majestic, strong.
Eighteen are her tongues for utterance
And yet her heart is one.[2]

Universal Brotherhood

In Bharati's love of Tamil and in his love of India, there was nothing narrow, parochial or fanatical. He dreams of boating on the moonlit Indus, in the company of Kerala damsels and singing sweet Telugu songs.[3] His nationalism was no soul-destroying fever; it respected and reconciled the supreme claims of the individual for self-realization and of all mankind for peace on earth and material happiness. He prays to goddess Saraswati for sweetness and light for every Indian in every home in every street, in every village.[4]

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[1]e.g., *vide* pages 30 to 38.
[2]*Vide* page 35.
[3]*Vide* page 28.
[4]*Vide* page 106.

And a drum-beat song[1] proclaims "the reign of Love" thus:

All human beings equal are
Joy will abound if we but see
That we are all one human kind...

Sound, drum, the message of unity,
Proclaim "Flourish in love". Proclaim
Welfare to all mankind on this
Our vast and variegated planet.

In this sense, Subramania Bharati was, like Mahatma Gandhi, a revolutionary who, far from destroying, only re-established the ancient Indian tradition of self-renewal. His roots in ancient and medieval Tamil culture sustained the opulence of foliage and flower which expressed the passionate longing for freedom and the human cry for universal brotherhood that marked the Indian renaissance in the first decades of the century. The vast changes that he brought about in Tamil poetry and prose and in the thinking of the Tamil people were in response to the demands of a new phase in human history, but they were by no means a break-away from the past. In the words of Dr. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, he was "radiantly autochthonous and bracingly modern". By articulating new ideas and emotions, he took Tamil back to the great days of the Saiva and Vaishnava singer-saints and further back to the elemental strength of the Sangam age.

With its steady, regular oscillation between *Aham*

[1] *Vide* pages 56-9.

and *Puram*, love and war, inner and outer, the Tamil genius has been through the ages centroverted, never unduly extroverted or introverted. To preserve this centroversion of the human mind is the prime function of poetry and in Tamil land the voice of poetry had never been neglected or suppressed in the conversation of the people. In singing of the ideals of social equality, individual freedom and human unity, Bharati was only reviving an ancient Tamil tradition, though the stimulus came from the movement for national integrity and political independence inspired by the modern West.

As Krishna Chaitanya observes, "Indian thought insists that the world of art is not closed, but in perpetual osmosis with the wide world of man's responsibilities and ideals". And because this art is indissolubly wedded to a beautiful, living and flexible mythology, the artist and the people alike are able and indeed obliged to choose the humanising, divinising or *daivik* feelings and reject the dehumanising, demoniac or *asurik* feelings which move masses of people when ideologies whip up current emotions. Like Mahatma Gandhi, Bharati used the ancient and still popular mythology with deft assurance, revealing the similarity between the poetic situation and the given historical situation, both serving as "objective correlatives" of a state of feeling which could mould heroes out of common clay.

Devotional Poems

Though Bharati's vogue as a patriotic poet has

happily endured, it is his devotional and metaphysical poems which give him a high and assured place among India's major poets. In fact, the poems on patriotic and social themes form not more than one sixth of his total lyrical output. However, it is his popularity as a poet of freedom that helped him to find a wide appreciative audience when his other and more enduring songs were published.

In India, the consubstantiality and inter-action of men and gods form the fundamental ground both of popular belief and the highest poetry. The heroic or self-transcendent dimension, the principle of growth through identity with ever larger living entities, is developed by the imagination feasting on the poetry not only of words but of hallowed places and uplifting stories. It is not God in the abstract, but Vinayaka, not any Vinayaka but the particular Manakkula Vinayaka of Pondicherry, whom Bharati invokes and praises in a garland of forty lyrics.[1] The aim of these songs is not to escape from responsibility, but to gain the courage and strength to face and overcome every challenge. Evil in society, like dirt on the floor, is there for quick removal. Bharati tells the child:

If you see someone doing wrong,
Be not afraid,
Attack him, child, and kick him
And spit upon his face.

Fearlessness, Bharati asserts repeatedly, is the sole

[1]Extracts on pages 102-4.

test of real devotion. The gods are not for worship only: they are also our companions in play, partners in work, helpers in service, friends that bring us strength and joy. In his hymns the poet prays for self-control, the mind and method to remove others' sufferings and work for others' welfare. Though thus specially helpful and personally available to you and me, each of these deities represents the one God, the God of Awareness who creates and rules the whole world.

This easy familiarity with the divine, which the poet and his public share, is well and fully exploited in the songs on Krishna, the embodiment of *prema*, who is not only father, king, teacher, friend as tradition permits, but is also mother, servant, pupil and lady-love![1] In thus daring to forge new human bonds with the Supreme, a little lapse in taste would spell disaster. How deft and successful these experiments are is well illustrated in Kanna, the pupil, telling the teacher: "You can teach me nothing. Give me freedom, and I shall learn", and in Kanna, the servant, fetching for his master what only a divine messenger could procure, the supreme bliss of union with Siva, the clarity of Siva-jnana.

Kali and Sakti Theme

The lyrics Bharati composed on Kali or Sakti form a group by themselves but the Sakti idea permeates all his later works.

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[1] *Vide* pages 114-136.

In Hindu mythology "Sakti" is but another name for the manifesting power, the creative principle. It includes both the notion of a concentrating, illuminating power that is Vishnu, and an active space-time principle that is Brahma, to form the complement of the male, positive, ultimate Awareness that is Siva. The Mother Goddess is the source of all; she is the universal creatrix. "She is the origin of all that is conscious, the origin, the knowledge, the perception of reality, the instigator of intellect."[1]

The word "Sakti" was a *mantra* to Bharati and there are verses of his entirely made up of this single word. Sakti, Mahasakti, Parasakti, Kali, Kangali, Chamundi —these are some of the names of that Universal Divine Energy which is manifest as Time and Event.

Bharati's Sakti poetry reaches the very acme of apocalyptic utterance in "The Dance of Dissolution".[2] In this the poet captures the terror and the glory of the Mother's cosmic dance where the anger is but the prelude to the love and bliss of resurrection.

Laureate of the Spirit

Beneath the patriot's love of the motherland and beyond the esoteric exultation in sporting with Supreme Siva, Sakti and Krishna, the inward journey of the "I" proceeds to the stillness of the real Self which is Aware-

---

[1]From *Hindu Polytheism* by Alain Danielou

[2]*Vide* pages 99-100.

ness-Bliss. This makes Bharati see in the "I" both "You" and "Him".

All birds that fly in the sky am I,
And all animals that roam the earth,
The shady forest trees and wind and water
And ocean too am I.[1]

This impersonal *ananda* and self-forgetful love, the energy of Sakti and the charm of Krishna, find utterance in Bharati as bliss in pain and triumph in tragedy:

If I put my finger in the fire
I feel the sweetness of your touch, Nandalala![2]

Pioneer in Prose

While Bharati's poems became instantaneously popular and in due course established his fame as a *Kavi Chakravarti* (Emperor of Poets), his contribution to Tamil prose had until recent times remained in the background. The Tamil people's innate and traditional response to good poetry rather than good prose may partly explain this attitude.

Being a professional as well as a free-lance journalist, Bharati's prose writings were voluminous. He started his career as Sub-Editor in the widely-read Tamil daily *Swadesamitran* in 1904. He had been the virtual editor of *India*, Tamil weekly, throughout the period of its publication (1906 to 1910). For brief periods, he

[1] *Vide* pages 84-5.
[2] *Vide* page 116.

also edited small-scale Tamil papers like *Chakravartini*, *Vijaya*, *Karma Yogi* and also an English monthly *Bala Bharata*. He was a regular contributor to English periodicals like *New India*, *Commonweal* and *Arya* and Tamil magazines such as *Vivekabhanu*, *Senthamizh* and *Jnana Bhanu*.

Mention must be made here of Bharati's contemporary, Mahamahopadhyaya U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, whose scholarship Bharati admired and whose prose he found refreshingly modern. Iyer liberated Tamil prose from the centuries-old shackles of ornateness and pedantry and evolved a style that was simple, graceful and fluid. This trend was successfully extended by Bharati to journalism in dealing with topical questions, where the idioms employed by common people could be freely used and the emancipation of Tamil prose from "panditry" could be completed. As a political activist and newspaper man, he wanted to share his thoughts with a wide readership. While passionately pleading for radical reform in verse and prose, he drew inspiration not only from the ideas and achievements of foreign lands but also from the concepts of dharma and *moksha* which are India's eternal values.

A Word about the Selections

The selections from his prose presented here reveal his wide-ranging concerns—from politics to vedanta, from women's lib to the progress glut. They also show the range and depth of his intellect—quickwitted yet sober, bold yet tender, incisive yet graceful. Parti-

cularly striking is his gentle humour which, in the context of his none-too-happy personal life, reveals a luminous, philosophical mind.

It is obvious that no selection from the vast and varied corpus of Bharati's verse and prose can satisfy all critics. This small window can give only glimpses of the wealth of Bharati's world.

And Translation

In choosing the best available translations and preparing afresh many, an attempt has been made to achieve the utmost fidelity to the spirit of the original, both in meaning and movement.

Even so, we cannot but recall Robert Frost's remark that "poetry is what gets lost in translation". The more authentic the writing the more firmly it is rooted in the soil it grew from. So much so that translation becomes a hopeless task; as C. Rajagopalachari put it, "even the emotions that go to form the substance of a poem are so intimately blended with the form that it is as difficult to translate as it is to rebuild a pomegranate fruit or an orange or a rose."

However, great literature transcends linguistic barriers. Even through inadequate translation it reveals the essential oneness of the human family despite the vast variety of its patterns of life and language.

K. Swaminathan

PART I

POEMS

(1)

VANDE MATARAM[1]

"Vande Mataram. Worship the Motherland",
We will sing this, this we will sing.

For caste or creed we will not care,
Birth in this land is the highest birth,
Brahmins and others are all the same.

The low-born Pariah, does he not
Live here with us, our countryman?
Can he ever become an alien who
May do us harm, say, a Chinaman?

Even if we had a thousand castes
What right have foreigners to come in?
All children of one Mother, we
Even if we quarrel needs must be
Brothers and sisters, must we not?

---

[1]Literally, "Hail Mother"; this refrain occurring in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel *Ananda Math* became a holy chant for Indian nationalists after the partition of Bengal in 1905. Chanting this "mantra" was treated as an act of sedition by the British Government.

This and the next two songs formed the text of a 4-page booklet titled "Swadesa Geetangal" which was printed in 1907 and distributed free by V. Krishnaswamy Iyer (a Moderate). The booklet was the first-ever publication of Subramania Bharati's songs.

Living together is true life,
Falling apart brings ruin to all.
Well we must this lesson learn :
No other wisdom do we need.

Whatever may befall us, let
All of us in common share it.
Let us three hundred millions[1] rise,
Or else let all of us together,
Three hundred millions fall.

Ashamed at heart of days now past
When slavery we hugged,
Let us spit out and spurn away
This despicable lot, and sing
"Vande Mataram".

K. SWAMINATHAN

Vande mataram enbom

[1]The then population of the Indian sub-continent.

(2)

WORSHIP OF THE MOTHERLAND

This land it is wherein my father
And my mother lived and loved:
And here too through millennia their
Good ancestors had lived and died.
And here their thoughts in thousands grew
And took as many shining shapes,
Shall I not gratefully remember
This and praise aloud this land,
Singing "Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram"?

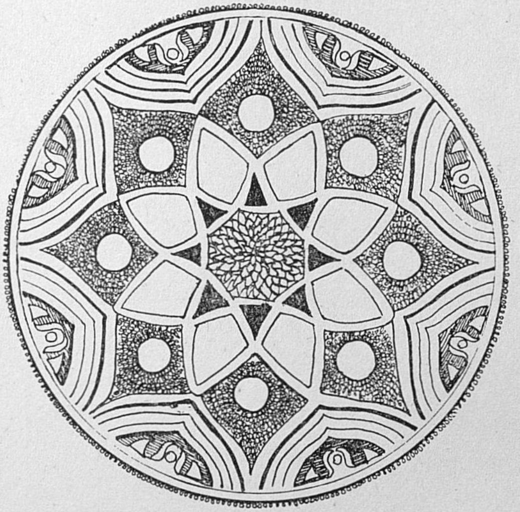
This land it is that gave us birth
And sweetened it with grace:
Here as children our mothers prattled,
As maidens in the moonlight danced,
Bathed their golden bodies in streams,
Then wedded and set up their own homes:
This land of ours, shall we not worship
Singing "Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram"?

Here our wives they cherished dharma
And giving birth to children, fed
And fondled them: here temples sprang
All round the people to uplift them.
And here when dead their bodies rest
As flower-like dust on dust.

This our land, shall we not worship
"Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram"?

—K.S.

Endaiyum taayum



(3)

OUR LAND

Ours is the incomparable mountain,
Himalaya firm, eternal.
Ours the peerless river Ganga
Whose water sweet is holy.
Ours is the unequalled scripture,
The Upanishad ineffable.
Ours is this golden land, this Bharat,
Proudly, loudly let us praise it.

Here mighty heroes and great seers,
Narada's music, wisdom perfect,
All glories auspicious flourished here.
Here overflowed Lord Buddha's Grace.
Let us proudly sing the praises
Of this great, ancient land of ours.

Unafraid we shall face troubles
When they come. No more shall we
Lie in the dust in penury.
Never shall we for selfish gain
Perform mean tasks. Never shall we
Meet empty-handed the demand
Of our dear sacred motherland.

Ours is the noble Aryan land

Abounding in milk, honey and rice
And fruits of every kind for ever.
Let us praise it, proudly, loudly.

—K.S.

Mannum Imaya Malai

(4)

FREEDOM PLANT

With tears, not water, this plant we reared:
Is it your pleasure, Lord, it should be seared?

A lustrous lamp with our life's ghee fed:
Is it your pleasure it should be dead?

After years a thousand there came on a day
A diamond most dazzling: shall we throw it away?

That virtue will win is a lie of the sages?
Not enough our suffering through all these ages?

Can't you see heroes and men of letters
Slaving at mills, rotting in fetters?

Countless good ones, their hearts stifled,
Blinded, bewildered, of all things rifled?

By baleful tyranny kept separated
Fathers from families, lovers ill-fated?

O Father, we have abused all that you gave us:
Who but you now to heal and save us?

Isn't sweet freedom the best of your boons?

Will you not guard it against heartless baboons?

Can life exist if there is no rain?
Without freedom are not all things vain?

Merciful, generous, can you not see
How our hearts are of falsehood free?

Is it in vain our substance we spend,
Torture our bodies, moan without end?

When for you and through you we fight for *your* right,
How comes it you cannot pity our plight?

Is this a new thing to which we aspire?
Didn't our forefathers have all we desire?

If virtue and you abide as they say,
Grant us this one gift in our day!

—P. S. Sundaram

Tanneer vitto valarthom

(5)

CHANT THE NAME OF BHARAT

"Bharat-desh", who say the name
Shall kill the fear of penury
And overcome the pain of hate.

On silvery, snow-clad mountains we
Shall roam and on the western ocean
Sail in ships, in every hamlet
Raise a temple and proudly claim,
"This, this is our Bharat-desh."

To Sri Lanka we shall build a bridge
Or raising Setu make a road;
And cultivate the hinterland
With overflowing Bengal floods;

From mines dug deep we shall extract
Gold and other minerals
Which we shall sell in distant lands
And buy the things we need at home.

Pearls in our southern sea abound:
And on the west coast foreign traders
Come in crowds and, bringing goods
We favour most, our favours seek.

In moonlight on the Indus waters
We shall sport in rowing boats
Singing with girls from Kerala
Songs in dulcet Telugu.

Wheat from the Ganges region will
Be bartered for Kaveri betel-leaves.
With Kerala ivory we shall reward
The lion-like poets of Maharashtra.

Instruments we shall make to bring
To Kanchi the voice of Kasi pandits;
To Rajput warriors we shall give
Gold from good Karnataka.

We shall pile up in every street
Mountains of silk and cotton garments,
Which we shall sell to all the world
For durable commodities.

Weapons we shall make and paper,
Establish factories and schools;
Tireless, upstanding, heads erect,
We shall speak Truth and dare and do
Deeds heroic.

Umbrellas we shall make, and ploughs,
Jute-bags and iron-nails; vehicles
That run and fly; and mighty ships
That set the whole world trembling.

Mantras we shall learn and *tantras*

For our service; we shall measure
The sky above and the fish in the ocean
We shall explore and thoroughly know
The moon's disc, and shall also master
The science of sweeping thoroughfares clean.

Great poems we shall write, paint fine
Pictures, foster arts and raise
Rich forests, factories, furnaces,
Rejoicing in all kinds of work.

Like nectar we shall cherish Tamil
Avvai's[1] words : "Two castes alone
There are—the Noble who are just
And ever ready to help others;
And the Base who are not."

—K.S.

Bharata desam enru

[1]An ancient poetess known for her wit and wisdom.

(6)

TO LIBERTY

Though torn away from warmth of home,
In prison-cell I pine,
Though rank and wealth depart and leave
Reproaches only mine,
Though griefs on griefs crowd without end
And shake and shatter me,
Dear goddess, Freedom, never would I
Forget to bow to thee.

Though he of rarest gifts possessed,
Who hath not found thy grace,
Though infinite learning comes to lift
Him far above his race,
Though he be mighty, high in fame,
Dear goddess, without thee,
Like a corpse jewel-adorned, his life
A dreary waste must be.

Goddess! Could it be called a land
The land without thy light?
What strength is there, what knowledge, zeal,
What spirit, wisdom bright?
What poetry, scriptures, or what arts,
Cherished and divine?
Goddess, they have sinned who have lost

The good that's only thine.

Their sickness grows on them, they lose
The fire that is life's zest;
Ranked with the beasts, behold, they stand
Even to themselves a jest.
No joy for them e'en in dreams; their life
Lacking nobility,
Goddess, mother, they've lost all grace
Because they know not thee.

—(MRS.) HEPHZIBAH JESUDASAN

Idantaru manaiyin neengi

(7)

BHARATA MATA

Whose the bow that wrought the end
Of Lanka's *rakshasas* of yore?
That of our Mother Terrible,
Bharata Devi, noble queen!

Whose the bow that broke in two
The body of Indrajit?
That of our Mantra-Deity,
Queen Bharata, Bhairavi's self!

"Godhead is one. Its children are we,
The world its joyous play."
The hand that wrote this scriptural text
Was that of Bharata, Mother divine!

"This world is made of thought. Should thought
Be filled with courage and strength of will,
All sufferings can be overcome."
These are the words of the Aryan Queen!

Shakuntala's son who patted and played
With a lion cub, who was he?
First-born, radiant offspring he
Of Bharata, the Queen !

Whose the shoulder that bore and bent
Gandiva and subdued the world?
That of Mother Arya Devi
Who guards and governs us all!

Whose the hand that gave away
The ear-rings at the moment of death?
That of Bharata Queen whose prowess
Poets sing in their sweetest songs!

Who uttered in the battle-field
The *Gita*'s words of highest wisdom
And gave us strength to conquer hate?
Who but Bharata, Queen divine?

Whose heart for father's sake renounced
Kingship and women's company
And kept the vow through life?
Whose but our Mother's!

"Love is God. In love will vanish
All life's sorrows." These words spoken
By Buddha, sovereign lord of the world,
Were words from the mouth of the Mother divine!

While Mithila burnt and Janaka sat
And hearkened to the Veda's meaning,
The mind so calm and strong, whose mind
Was it but that of our Mother divine?

Whose poesy made *Shakuntalam*
The play divine? Whose but the grace

O Goddess Bharata who knows
The inner meaning of Brahma's doings?

—K.S.

Munnai Ilangai

Bharata Mata statuette

The photograph overleaf is that of the terracotta statuette (61 cm height) of Bharata Mata (Mother India) brooding sadly over her children subject to foreign rule, as visualized by Subramania Bharati and his close associates the Mandayam brothers, S. Tirumalachar, Srinivasachar and Parthasarathi Iyengar. The figurine was made to their specification in Pondicherry in the year 1917 and later brought to British India.
Repainted with the modified flag of the Indian National Congress adopted in the early thirties, the statuette was being preserved by the Mandayam family in Mysore since 1939.
It is now in the care of *"Bharati-200"*, an organization of Bharati enthusiasts in New Delhi.

Courtesy : S.P. Krishnaswamy and A.N. Simha, Mysore

(8)

OUR MOTHER

Historians, archaelogists
Who know what happened long ago,
They cannot say when she was born,
Our Mother, so ancient she is.

Though old, immeasurably old,
A maiden yet, she lives on earth,
A maiden ever young and fair.

She has three hundred million faces
But one sole life, majestic, strong.
Eighteen are her tongues for utterance
And yet her heart is one.

Her tongue the Vedas holds, her hand
A sword with goodness bright;
Gracious she is to her good folk,
Strong-shouldered to kill evil ones.

She with six hundred million arms
Upholds and spreads true righteousness
But she destroys and turns to dust
Those who approach her with evil intent.

More patient than the Earth, her heart

Is full of virtues rare. But when
Confronted by foes evil-minded
She becomes a Durga fierce.

Our Mother adores the Ascetic who
Wears in his matted locks the moon:
She worships too the discus-wielding
Ruler of the seven worlds.

In yoga matchless, she knows well
That Truth is One alone. Full too
Of noble enjoyment, she commands
Innumerable heaps of gold.

She blesses and showers benefits
On Kings who rule in righteousness.
But if they fail and fall, she will
Destroy them and then dance with joy.

Daughter heroic of the white
Himalaya is our Mother.
Even if one day he lost his firmness,
She will stand for ever and flourish,
She will stand and flourish, our Mother.

—K.S.

Tonru nigazhndadu

(9)

OUR WILD MOTHER[1]

Our mother is a spirit wild,
A spirit mad and stark;
Her lover,[2] he hugs the searing flame
And dances in the dark.

Waves of melody heave and eddy
In the fairy sea of song;
She leaps and laves in the spin of the waves
And rides their crest along.

In the woodland bright of the poet's light
Blow buds divinely sweet;
She clasps them to her and with beauty drunk,
She reels on tripping feet.

She's conned the parts of a thousand arts
And sown them o'er the earth.
Behold, she sings and the Veda rings,
Her trident conquers death.

---

[1]The concept of India as the mother is worked into the idea very familiar to the Indian people—that of Parasakti, the Power Supreme, the Mother. Thus India is subtly realised as a primal power, irresistible, fierce, inscrutably beautiful.

[2]Lord Siva who carries the fire in his hand and is the Lord of Cosmic Dance

In the war of wars, she springs as the might
In the bend of Partha's bow[1];
She leaps to kill and slakes her will
With the blood of the cloven foe.

—A. Srinivasa Raghavan

Peyaval kaan

[1]The war of wars is the epic war of the Mahabharata. Partha is Arjuna, the great pandava Prince and archer, one of the heroes who fought in the war.

(10)

THE BHARAT COMMONWEALTH[1]

Long live Bharat Commonwealth, Jai! Jai! Jai!
This Commonwealth is the common wealth
Of all three hundred million people.
Peerless is this Commonwealth,
Yes, something new in the world!
(Long live Bharat Commonwealth)

One man robbing another of food,
Can this custom last?
One man watching another suffer,
Can such life survive?
Survive before our eyes,
Survive here in our midst?

Lovely gardens, spacious fields
Innumerable enrich this land.
Fruit and tubers and grains in plenty,
Immeasurably it yields,
For ever and ever it yields!
(Long live Bharat Commonwealth)

---

[1]This seems to be the last ever song composed by Bharati and was sung by him at a public meeting in Triplicane Beach, Madras, in July 1921.

Today we make a law and shall
Henceforth for ever enforce it:
If a single mouth goes without food
The world we will destroy !

Lord Krishna spoke and said, "I am,
Myself, I am in every creature."
The way whereby all may attain
Immortal life, India will show
To the whole world! Yes, it will show
To the whole world!
(Long live Bharat Commonwealth)

We are all one clan, we are all one race,
All, all are India's children;
Of equal status, equal weight,
Of equal value, all of us
are sovereign monarchs in this land !
Yes, all of us are monarchs
In this land !
(Long live Bharat Commonwealth)

—K.S.

Bharata samudayam

(11)

AN ANTHEM

Long live pure, chaste Tamil!
Long live the good Tamil folk!
Long live our Bharat-land
Priceless gem divine!

May the ills afflicting us today
Disappear !
May abiding good come to us!
All evil die away!
May dharma flourish and *adharma* perish!

May the manly efforts,
The noble enterprises,
Of this our Aryan nation
Succeed triumphantly!
May the people of our land
Rise higher day by day!

Vande Mataram! Vande Mataram!
Vande Mataram!

—N. Balasubramanian

Vaazhiya sentamizh

(12)

TO MAHATMA GANDHI

Long may you live, Gandhi Mahatma,
You who have brought new life to Bharat,
The land which of all lands on earth
Lay most degraded, poverty-stricken,
Ruined, forsaken, of freedom bereft.

Endless glory, yea, a crown
Universal you have gained
Devising a simple plan whereby
Our people can shake off slavery,
Breathe free, grow rich and learned and wise,
And show to all the world the way
Of true, enlightened citizenship.

Are you the monkey-god[1] who brought,
As an antidote to cobra-venom,
The healing herb from the high Himalaya?
Or are you Shri Krishna[2] who held up
The hill to ward off thunder and lightning?

---

[1]Hanuman, in the *Ramayana*, brought from the Himalayas a hill full of life-giving herbs to revive Rama and Lakshmana in the battle-field.

[2]In the *Bhagavata*, Krishna held the Govardhana hill to shield people from the wrath of Indra.

Simple, simple, new and simple
Is the cure that you have found
For heteronomy, painful and chronic
Malady: "Count as your own life
The life of him who comes to kill you.
Know that every human being
Is an image of God, a child of God."
This wisdom bold and true you dared
To thrust into grim politics
Rife with sordid murder and strife.

Shunning the way of war which is
But murder on a massive scale,
You chose a method much more effective.
The path of dharma prepared by seers
And servants of God, satyagraha,
Unfailing, fruitful, for bringing to Bharat
A future bright, and to the world
Forgetfulness of deeds of hate.
May this good dharma live for ever.

—K.S.

Vaazhka nī emmān

(13)

FREEDOM[1]

Freedom, freedom, freedom!
To the Pariahs, to the Tiyas, to the Pulayas
freedom!
To the Paravas, to the Kuravas, to the Maravas,[2]
freedom!
Come, let us labour all,
Sparing naught and hurting none,
Walking in the way of Truth and Light.

There shall be none of low degree,
And none shall be oppressed.
Born in India, all are of noble birth.

---

[1] & [2] In his brief introduction to his translation of this poem, the late C. Rajagopalachari had said: "A poem characteristic of one phase of Bharati's work—that of awakening the passion for freedom and the consciousness of equality and unity in a land torn for centuries by foreign rule and sharp caste divisions. The Pariahs, the Tiyas and the Pulayas mentioned in the poem formed the lowest rung in the Hindu social ladder while the Paravas (fishermen), the Kuravas (nomadic hunters) and the Maravas (originally a fighting caste that sank in later days to the position of 'criminal tribes') were only a little above them in status.

The Tamil original of the poem has a vigour, lilt and song quality that cannot be captured in an English rendering. It was sung all over the Tamil land in the days of the nationalist struggle. Its influence in rousing the democratic sense of the masses has been immeasurable.

(From *The Voice of a Poet*, Bharathi Tamil Sangham, Calcutta)

Wealth and learning—may they flourish,
With joy of mind, let us live
Like brothers all alike.
Perish ignorance!

In man and woman, alike,
No more of subordination.
In every walk of life equality.
Man and woman shall equal be
In this land of ours.
To the Pariahs, to the Tiyas, to the Pulayas,
freedom,
To the Paravas, the Kuravas, the Maravas,
freedom!

—C. Rajagopalachari

Vidudalai, viḍudalai, viḍudalai

(14)

THE PALLU DANCE OF FREEDOM

Let us dance and let us sing
Our Pallu song, now we have gained
Joyous freedom, joyous freedom!

The time is past when Brahmins were
"Sirs" and white men lords and masters;
When beggars we obeyed and did
Humble service to our exploiters!

Now everywhere the word is "Freedom",
Sure and certain we are all equals!
The conch of victory we shall blow
And let the whole world hear it!

The time is come when all are one,
When fraud and falsehood gone for good,
The good alone are deemed as great
And cheats and hypocrites are no more!

The ploughman and toiler we shall honour
And spurn the lazy lover of pleasure!
Barren land we shall not water,
Or wear out our bodies serving idlers!

Now we know the land we live in

Is our own; it is ours and only ours!
To none on earth shall we henceforth
Be slaves; in servitude to God
Alone we shall for ever live!

—K.S.

Aaduvome

(15)

THE KUMMI OF WOMEN'S FREEDOM[1]

We sing the joys of freedom;
In gladness we sing.
And He that shineth in the soul as Light shines in the
eye, even He is our Strength.

Dance the Kummi, beat the measure;
Let this land of the Tamils ring with our dance.
For now we are rid of all evil shades;
We've seen the Good.

Gone are they who said to woman: 'Thou shalt not
open the Book of Knowledge.'
And the strange ones who boasted saying:
"We will immure these women in our homes"—
Today they hang down their heads.

Dance the Kummi, beat the measure.
Let this land of the Tamils ring with our dance.
For now we are rid of all evil shades;
We've seen the Good.

---

[1]This English rendering was done by the poet himself with a note explaining "kummi" thus: "The 'kummi' dance is perhaps peculiar to Southern India and is danced by women in a circle. The song that accompanies this very picturesque dance is also called 'kummi'."

The life of the beast that is beaten, tamed and tied down,
Fain would they lay it on us in the house; but we
scornfully baffled them.
Dance the Kummi, beat the measure;
The dog they sell for a price, nor ever consult his will.
Nigh to his state had they brought us—would rather
they had killed us at a blow—
But infamy seized them.
Dance the Kummi, beat the measure;

And they talk of wedded faith;
Good; let it be binding on both.
But the custom that forced us to wed, we've cast it
down and trampled it under foot;
Dance the Kummi, beat the measure;

To rule the realms and make the laws
We have arisen;
Nor shall it be said that woman lags behind man in the
knowledge that he attaineth.
Dance the Kummi, beat the measure;

To know the Truth and do the Right,
Willing we come;
Food we'll give you; we'll also give a race of immortals.
Dance the Kummi, beat the measure.

—C. Subramania Bharati

Pengal vidudalai petra

(16)

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF OUR PEOPLE

The heart cannot endure the thought
Of the fallen state of these poor people!
They die of fright ! Of everything
On earth they are afraid! "On this
Tree, that tank, or asleep up there
Treacherous demons threaten," they say,
For ever in fear and sorrow lost!

A conjuror they say and panic
At the word ! Black magic, sorcery
A thousand banes and curses haunt them!
With what as taxes people pay
All kings on earth protect the people—
Before this "Government" they tremble
Deeming it some dreadful demon!

The sight of a sepoy frightens them!
The town policeman makes them tremble!
When someone with a gun is seen,
Far, far away, they hide themselves!
At home, they stand up and salute
Each passer-by in uniform!
Hands ever folded, catlike, timid,
Servile is their whole behaviour!

The heart cannot endure the thought
Of the fallen state of these poor people!
How many splits and conflicts
Bedevil, afflict these people!
"Five-headed serpent", says the father—
"Six-headed", says the son—the quarrel
Leads to hatred which may last
For any length of time!

They know no scripture; but they trust
Friends who quote some pseudo-Shastra!
So brothers, cousins persecute
Each other for some doctrine's sake!
Base ones who praise them, flatter them,
Blindly they obey, and fiercely fight
Because one is a devotee
Of Siva, the other of Vishnu!

Unbearable the sight, the thought
Of their sad plight, and yet one cannot
Hate them! Even gruel to drink
They lack and know not why they starve!
"Famine, famine", helplessly
They cry and sigh and slowly die!
There is no way, alas, to end
Their suffering and pain!

Countless are their maladies!
No strength they have to stand or walk;
Like children blind they follow others
Where they are led and get entrapped!
In this great, hallowed land where once

Flourished a million noble arts,
These wretched people languish like
So many senseless brutes.

—K.S.

Nenju porukkudillaiyé

(17)

LABOUR

Ye that heat and melt iron
Ye makers of machinery
Ye squeezers of juice from sugarcane
Ye divers into the sea for pearl-oysters
Ye that drip sweat in a thousand trades—
I praise and glorify you all:
You do Brahma's work on earth.

Ye that temper clay and make pots
Ye that hew wood and build homes
Ye the givers of fruit, ripe and green,
Ye that till the wet lands and grow crops
Ye suppliers of oil, milk and ghee
Ye spinners and weavers of fine fabrics—
Gods protect us from Heaven:
Ye protect us on earth.

Ye creators of songs and poems
Ye artistes of the classical dance
Ye observers of the truth of material world
And architects of sciences therein
Ye that guide us in Virtue's way
Ye that enable us to experience the joys we seek—
Ye are all gods in visible shape
We behold the Divine in you, unsought.

—S. Ramakrishnan

Irumbai kāychi

(18)

THE NEW RUSSIA

The Mother Great, the Power supreme,
Turned her glance benign towards Russia.
The Revolution of the Age,
Behold the wonder, rises high.
The tyrant howling falls down limp.
The shoulders of the heavenly gods
Are swelling now with joy and pride.
Eyes hot with unshed tears, the demons
Perish. O people of the world,
Behold this mighty change!

The wicked tyrant called the Czar
Ruled like Hiranya, arrogant.
The virtuous and the saintly were
Helpless sufferers; righteousness
Was for this fool a wisp of straw.
Like snakes in the jungle, falsehood, deceit
And other evils infested the land.

Those who ploughed and sowed and reaped
Went without food; diseases spread;
Subservient slaves grew wealthy, while
The truthful faced cruel imprisonment,
Death by hanging or languishing

In slow decay in the devil-haunted
Wilderness of Siberia.

A murmur faint meant years in jail,
A questioning 'why' brought banishment;
Thus in that land had goodness perished
And cruelty reigned as the law of life.
The Mother felt pity in her mind
And turned her glance to save her servants
True and faithful, as is her wont
And lo ! the deadly tyrant died.

The mighty Czar collapsed as if
The Himalayas should tumble down.
The mindless multitude around him,
False flatterers and time-serving plotters,
Fell down in heaps, like trees uprooted
By some terrible storm—the forest now
Mere faggots.

In one brief hour arose the people's
Rule over people's life; a great republic
Has been proclaimed. All fetters shattered,
All men are free. Like a ruined wall
Kali[1] has fallen. The Krita Yuga,
The golden age, has now begun.

—K.S.

Maa Kaali Paraa-sakti

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[1]Personification of Kali Yuga, Age-of-Strife; to be pronounced with a short 'a', as distinct from Kālī (pronounced "Kaalee"), the Power-of-Time aspect of the Mother Supreme.

(19)

MURASU[1]

Beat, O drum, proclaim in all
The eight directions victory!
To all the world this message sound:
"May the Vedas flourish ever.
May the eternal Sakti who
With three-eyed Siva dances, triumph,
Ever triumph," say it, drum.

I speak what is good for all people.
I speak what I know to be truth.
God help me, the one God who is
The source of all prosperity !

Fools are they who speak of several
Gods and kindle fires of hate;
The one sole Being in all beings, the one
Single life in all that lives,
That and that alone is God.

Fire-worshipping Brahmins, Muslims who
Daily to the Quarters pray, and Christians
Who bow before the Cross in churches—
All worship but one God, the Being
Abiding in every being. One God

[1]Only excerpts are translated.

Alone in all the world there is.
Let us have no quarrels about it.

Look, we have here in our house
A white cat. In her litter are kittens
Of various colours. One is gray,
Another black; the third snake-brown,
The fourth milk-white. No matter what
The colour, they all are equal, are
They not? Can any one say one hue
Is superior to another?
If colours differ, does nature differ?
All human beings here, you see,
Are just the same in thought and deed.

Beat, drum. Proclaim the reign of Love.
All human beings equal are.
Joy will abound if we but see
That we are all one human kind.

There is food enough on earth, we know,
For all mankind. Plough, sow, reap, eat.
Live right. Steal not another's share.

Like brothers born are men on earth.
How can the strong exploit the weak
And feed upon their flesh ? Divine
Is strength. It is God's strength that gives
Us life. A child is weak and helpless.
Does one trample on a child?

Knowledge, let us increase; let knowledge

Spread through all mankind alike.
Raise the lowly. Then will God
Shower blessings on us all.

Equality and fraternity
Can harm no one; but they will bring
Freedom to all alike on earth.

Sound, drum, the message of unity.
Proclaim, "Flourish in love." Proclaim
Welfare to all mankind on this
Our vast and variegated planet.

—K.S.

Vetri eṭṭu dikkum eṭṭa

(20)

SEEKING THE GRACE OF GODDESS POESY

Come, Goddess with the jewelled name,
Beloved Goddess, Poesy !
Days, months and years have passed since I
Beheld directly face to face
Your gracious countenance and you took
And used me as your slave. O then
We two alone, hidden, withdrawn
From the human crowd, rejoiced and sported
In a limitless ocean of joy.
In those days which together we spent
No bird-song in the garden sounded
Sweet as your voice, no flower shone bright
Like those your eyes, no rivulet
Ran cool and smooth like your clear words.
Alone with you, with you my life,
My goddess, many days I spent
Adoring you and you alone.
As if a thorn should pierce and choke
One's throat when one is swallowing heavenly
Nectar, when I was all absorbed
Enjoying your blissful company,
I was afflicted by the cruellest
Evil in the world, Penury.
I for a while went out and, getting
Rid of the thorn, returned. Alas,

The golden pitcher of nectar divine
Had disappeared.
Yes, to get rid
Of painful Penury, I agreed
To serve a chieftain in the south
And do base jobs in this base world.
You, faithless lady, forsook me and vanished.

Missing the bliss ineffable,
Your gift of grace, I suffered anguish.
A few days later (how shall I say it?)
The memory of my life with you
Faded slowly from the mind.

The story goes that once a sage
Cursed and condemned to be transformed
Into a pig, forewarned his son
(Before the curse could take effect):
"Do not, my son, stand by and watch me
Living the vile life of a pig.
Quickly take a sword, hack, slay
That hateful body. This, your duty,
Do. This, my command, obey:
Do this and know it is no sin."
Reluctantly the youth agreed.
The sage having become a pig,
The son recalled the sire's injunction,
Could not himself endure the sight
Of his famed parent's present plight,
And sword in hand came near to kill him.
But then the pig with penance ripe
Uttered these words, "Stop, fellow, stop.

Stop, stop, I tell you. This life, I find
Is not as painful as once I thought
It would be. Wind and water I have,
And grass and roots in plenty to eat.
Pleasant and sweet enough it is.
If after six or seven moons
You come again, you may kill me then."

Distressed to hear this plea, the youth
Bent down his head and went away.
Many months later the youth returned
And found his father in the sty
Well settled amid a family
Of little piglets male and female.
Doubting his eyes and sadly grieved,
He pleaded, "Father, father, what,
What do I see? Does this become
Your name and fame, your greatness which
Great saints and vedic scholars praise?"
With these words and eyes filled with tears
He drew the sword to slay the pig.
The quondam sage in anger cried,
"Away! Get out! You evil wretch!
Pleasant and sweet I find this life.
But if it happens that you feel
Unhappy, plunge into your heart
The sword, and perish." So saying, the pig
In penance ripe preserved its life
And went back to its wallowing.
Seeing all this the youth reflected :
"When people fall from high estate
They are at first a little bewildered.

But not for long, for soon they come
To love the new low life they lead,
Though full of falsehood it may be.
They quite forget the nobler life
That once was theirs. Such, such, alas
Is *maya's* magical power of illusion".

Serving one with whale-like body,
Tiny mind and full seven wives,
I lost my pride and lived a life
Like that of the sage in the story.

—K.S.

Vaaraay kavidaiyaam

(21)

A SPAN OF EARTH

A span of earth, no more;
And there,
On that tiny spot,
A house fair,
Graceful-pillared, white-terraced,
For me meet,
With a well, a palm branch swaying,
And cocoanuts sweet.

Palms! Some ten or twelve
Near by;
The moonlight, like a pearly flame,
Dancing high;
Leaning softly to my ear,
The koel's cry;
And stirring my heart to gladness,
The young south wind's sigh.

Beside me, shedding the grace of song,
A woman true;
And in the joy our commingling,
Poetry's hue;
There guarding us, Mother[1], in that lonely waste,

[1]Parāsakti, the Power Supreme

Thy protecting arm;
And swaying high the hearts of men,
My poem's charm.

—A. S. R.

Kaani nilam vendum

(22)

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

The Sun's light all over the skies;
the Sun's light on all the hills;
over the wavy watery seas,
on the earth and above the trees,
in the woods and on the banks,
the Sun's light everywhere!
Ah, why then this darkness
in the human heart alone?

Just when the flood of light moves
like a vast sweep of brightness,
and the ocean of light, and typhoon-light,
and light the goddess eternal
surrounds this world entire,
one lonely heart alone
gathers the darkness of envy
and beats on: what a shame!

Light like the nectar of fresh blossoms,
Light praised by numberless birds,
Light in whose effulgence earth,
water, and wind embrace in joy,
Such Light overflows the world;
and yet this despicable heart beats
In the miserable darkness

filled with countless evils.

The lights smile on the lake-waters;
the mountains laugh in their loveliness;
Lightning spreads golden brightness
among the dark rain-laden clouds.
And yet a poor heart sits drooping
though it has learned the scriptures
And heard about the Vedic clue
to the heart of bliss.

—DR. PREMA NANDAKUMAR

* *Vaanam engum*

(23)

THE COMET[1]

Welcome, flaming comet! like
A palm-tree on a mustard standing,
A tiny star a long tail trailing,
Friend of the morning star in the east!

Your long tail woven of substance subtler
Than air and stretching innumerable
Millions of miles, they say, will not
Touch the earth or do any harm
To the poor creatures that dwell thereon.
Those who know tell a thousand strange
Stories about you.

Centuries have passed since we
The common people of Bharat land
Knew all about astronomy—
Now from foreigners we learn
About you, not from our own people!

Anyhow, welcoming you, O flame,
A few plain questions I shall ask you:
They say that you will do much harm
To wicked persons and submerge

[1]The visit of Halley's Comet in 1910

This poor old earth in a sea of sorrows
And then depart; is it true or false?

They also say that God ordains
Your movements and you therefore punish
People only to purify
The earth. Now, is this true or false?

Though regularly you approach the earth
Once in five and seventy years
The present visit portends, they say,
Countless novelties : Is it true or false?

They say this advent will bring back
Many long lost spiritual powers and *jnana*
Supreme to us. Is it true or false?

—K.S.

Tinaiyin meedu panai ninru

(24)

FALSE OR REAL[1]

Ye that stand ! Ye that walk ! Ye that fly !
Are you all a dream, so many optical illusions?
And O Learning, Hearing, Reflecting!
Are ye too trivial shadows, shallow, insubstantial?

Sky familiar! sunshine warm! clustering trees!
Are you all mere water in a mirage,
Only visual fallacy?

If all that went before is dead and buried
Like a dream, am I too but a dream?
Is all this world a false appearance?
Time, one notion, and the many
Notions which are forms, their order
Their pattern, are they falsehoods?
And their functioning too, a falsehood?
If every garden-tree emerges

[1]Deriding the theory that this world is a mere illusion, Bharati, in a short introduction to this poem *inter alia* says: This theory is of no use for the householder. We do need four things in this world, viz., longevity of life, unimpaired health, intelligence and wealth. One should pray earnestly to one's own chosen deities to give one these. All gods are one. See the light divine in *dharma* (responsible behaviour), *artha* (worldly prosperity) and *kama* (deisre/enjoyment). Once you see this light, the fourth state of *moksha* (freedom from bonds) will come of its own accord.

From a seed, was then the garden
At any time unreal? Who
Would accept it if one said it?

If all that is seen must disappear
Will not what is hidden come to view?
From futile falsehoods what eternal
Law can flow? In what we see,
In that alone is certitude,
Not at all in what we see not.
That which we see is Sakti;
Such seeing is Eternity.

—N.B.

Nirpaduvé

(25)

TO THE MIND

Never will the past return !
Thinking always of the past,
Fall not, O fools, in the destructive
Pit of grief and care ! Forget,
Forget what's past. Hold steadfastly
The faith that you are born anew
Each day. Eat, play, be happy, live !
All evil will vanish and never come back !

—K.S.

Sendradini meelaadu

(26)

KNOWLEDGE ALONE IS GOD

Ye, foolish folk, who roam about
In search of myriad fancied gods,
Have you not heard the myriad scriptures
Declare knowledge alone is God?

Why worship Bull-god, Wood-god, Hunter-god
When you have been told that the Awareness
Which pervades the universe,
This and this alone is God?

Why stumble and fall into creeds insane?
Why not listen to the *Srutis*
That say that Siva is Pure Awareness?

The Vedas say a million forms
With a million names are manifestations
Of one sole Being. But you mistake
Appearances for Reality.

All states and moods are states and moods
Of one sole Sakti, Power supreme.
The highest vedantic state discovered
By the sages is *santi*. Heaven is
But a good life lived here on this earth
Free from all care. Why must you think

Of rice and munch dry husk? The Self,
The light that shines within all beings,
Is the Brahman you deem inaccessible.

Why go collecting gods and stories
And spreading false beliefs? One, one
Sole Brahman is the Awareness in you.

The one eternal Brahman, the one
True Being, is the Awareness in you.

—K.S.

Aayiram deyvangal

(27)

A FIRELING

I came across a tiny flame, a fireling,
And put it in a tree-hole in the forest.
The forest burned down into ashes.
Ha, ha! Is there small or big,
Young or old, in fire's heroic power?

—K.S.

Akkinik-kunjonru

(28)

LOVE THINE ENEMY[1]

Love thine enemy, heart of mine, Oh!
Love thine enemy.

Hast thou not seen the shining flame
Amidst the darkening smoke?
In foeman's soul lives Krishna, whom
As Love the wise invoke.

Oft we have preached to men that God
In all that is doth shine.
Why, then, my heart, 'tis God that stands
Arrayed as foemen's line.

Dost know that limpid pearls are found
Within the oyster vile?
Hast seen on dunghill, too, sometimes
The starry blossom smile?

The heart that fans its wrath, shall it
The Inner Peace possess?
The honey poison-mixed, shall it
Be wholesome nevertheless?

---

[1]This translation into English done by the Poet bears the date September 22, 1915.

Shall we who strive for Life and Growth,
Lend thought to Sad Decay?
'Thine evil thoughts recoil on thee',
So do the wise ones say.

When Arjuna fought, 'twas Krishna whom
He faced, disguised as foes;
'Twas Krishna, too, that drove his car
In charioteering pose.

Strike not the tiger threatening thee,
But love it, straight and true,
The Mother of All hath donned that garb,
Salute her there, there, too.

Love thine enemy, heart of mine, Oh!
Love thine enemy.

—C. Subramania Bharati

Pakaivarukku arulvai

29

THE DRUM OF VICTORY

Beat the kettle-drum, beat the kettle-drum,
Victory ! Victory !
We have struck down the Demon Fear
And torn asunder the Serpent Falsehood;
We have gained the Vedic life wherein
This wondrous world tastes nectar-sweet.

In the sun's bright splendour we have bathed
And revelled in absorbing Light,
That ambrosia sweet;
The Lord of Death, who comes in stealth
To destroy the life of things that live,
Him we've stared at and shaken with fright.

The crow and sparrow are our kin;
Seas and mountains are our friends.
Whichever side we turn, nothing
And no one but ourselves, we see,
And bliss and bliss alone enjoy.

—K.S.

Jaya berikai kottadaa

(30)

TO HIS HEART

Yet once more let me tell you, craven heart,
No use whatever in grieving over aught;
Not through our desires are we here—
Beginning, middle and end *we* have not wrought;
Through the supernal grace of some great God
You have found that earthly things are dearly bought;
No worries more need future years bring
If only to your freedom you will cling.

Things unimagined she can bring about
And make them work together her planned ends;
Wilfully to pervert truth is sin,
Or be ungrateful for the good she sends;
My mistress and my goddess, brave men's queen,
Goddess even of the gods whom she defends:
Guardian of marches, giver of domestic joy,
In praise of her flower-like feet yourself employ.

As Sakti we shall laud her, Muruhan,
Sankaran call her, Kannan our heart's ease;
Your only sure refuge on earth, who can
Remove your wants, give sorrow its surcease;
Ask for the greatness that devotion brings,
Freedom from hunger and from fell disease,

Your feet set firmly on the virtuous road
By Her whose own two feet the world bestrode.

"Give me riches if I ask for them;
Remove the smallnesses that in me dwell,
On the tight string of learning thread my thoughts;
Through mercy kill my doubts and ring their knell;
Drive out that devil, the ever-tormenting self;
And make me seek your grace, undrying well:
Guide me and guard me, never let us part,
Om Sakti, obeisance," say to her, my heart.

What comes out as song is all *Her* saying—
O heart, an idle thing she won't tell thee;
You will get what you ask, without a doubt—
Harm won't assail; God is; Victory shall be;
Once more I tell you this: The Primordial Force
The Vedas' visible head and crown is She:
She has cast us in the saintly Janaka's part—
"Om Sakti, obeisance," say to her, my heart.

—P. S. S.

Innum oru murai solvén

(31)

SELF CONQUEST

What reaches the eye,
Cannot the hand reach out to it?
The sky seen from the earth,
Can we not make it our own, is it beyond us?
O primal force
That fills sky and earth, eye and mind !
Are we merely to dream and dream
And toil
And in the end slump in a futile heap?

All that the heart yearns for,
All gifts,
Glory and merit and all else noble
Can be ours,
Yea, if only we conquer self.
So spake the sages
Ages ago.

And we who hear now and know,
Are we to stand, listless, nerveless,
Sunk into nothing?
Is it beyond us, this power,
The power to win
And rule the self?

—K.S.

Kannil teriyum

(32)

LIBERATION

Far enisled in honeyed ocean,
Where the zephyr runs
Fleetly in delight of motion,
Live the Shining Ones.
Ah! come near us, comrades linking
Love with joy, life's nectar drinking.
Let perpetual gladness flourish :
All true joys our spirit nourish
And for this, O Mother!
Grant us liberation.

Let us fail not when Dark Powers
Strike to make an end.
Give us such exalted hours
Heaven to us shall bend.
Let us know the word deep hiding :
Perish false—the true abiding :
Perish pain and famine shatter!
Let us of thy largesse scatter
And for this, O Mother!
Grant us liberation.

Let celestial music flowing
From thy raptured sphere.
And the splendours round thee glowing,

Cling about us here.
Oh! cry 'victory' on our slaughters,
Take, O Gods! and wed our daughters—
Yield us, too, the Heavenly Maiden,
        And for this, O Mother !
        Grant us liberation.

—Dr. James H. Cousins

Véndumadi yeppodum vidudalai

(33)

'I'

All birds that fly in the sky am I
And all animals that roam the earth
The shady forest trees and wind and water
And ocean too am I.

All stars that shine in the heavens am I
And also the vast expanse of empty space.
All worms in soil and fish in water am I.

All the poems that Kamban sang and all
Statues, palaces and towers am I.

The music sweet that maidens make—and every
Flowing fount of happiness am I.
The falsehood of frail people too am I
And all the pangs of unendurable pain.

The activator of a myriad *mantras*,
The movement in all moving things,
Maker of a myriad *tantras*
And the proclaimer of Shastras and Vedas
Am I.

The ruler of the phantom 'I' am I,
The wanderer in the flaming heaven of *jnana*,
The one light of Awareness shining
In everything that is.

—K.S.

Vaanil Parakkinra

(34)

THE FLOOD OF SIVA SUPREME

A flood there is that flows within,
Without, and fills, and is indeed
All things that are. The sages call it
God. Out of that flood spring forth
Whatever we see and feel and know.
Boundless, whole, free, unattached.

Whether That is being or non-being
Even the wise are ever unsure.
Empty space, Awareness, cloud
That showers down many different powers—
Combining atoms, splitting them;
Gross, minute, subtler than the subtlest;
With no identity, with all
Identical; One alone, yet many;
Omnipresent, omnipotent,
Omniscient, all creeds proclaim it.

It is itself the one who prays,
The prayer, the prayed-for and the fruit;
The sight, the seer and the seen.
Majestic, indescribable,
Few, few are they who know It. Those
Who know It know the ultimate Truth,
The fruit of life. Free from all sorrow
And imperfection, all their wishes

Fulfilled, with nothing to desire,
They live even here in bliss divine
Praised as gods by dwellers on earth.
Alone with That Alone, they need
Nothing and yet they rule the world.

This flood, O brother, is yours when you
But wish it, ready to spring forth,
A fount of nectar in your heart.

Very easy is the means whereby
This ever-available flood of bliss
Is made to flow into and through you.

It is enough to think of It.
Think; and this cool nectar bubbles
Up and fills your heart. Think, say,
"The flood of bliss divine which flows
Ever as everything, everywhere
Flows through me, fills me to the brim."

No ochre dress, no matted hair
You need to gain the state supreme;
The mental attitude will do.
No need for Shastras, the four Vedas,
Sacred hymns if you but keep
In constant touch with your own heart.
No penance, discipline you need.

The faith that Siva, Siva alone
Exists, this is enough. Think! think

And say, "Siva, who is everywhere
As everything eternally,
Now comes, flows through me and fills me;
Now the Siva-flood perennial
Flows through me, fills me to the brim."

Such firm faith in the mind will do.

—K.S.

Ullum puramum aay

(35)

AGNI—THE GOD-WILL[1]

An Affirmation

Lo, He is rising on the altar of our sacrifice, Agni, the All-Will ablaze, and He leaps forth on all sides chasing the defeated shadows of the Dark Realm,—the Flame !

Lo, He ascends unto Heaven lifting up His golden arms. And Dawn, the maiden, whose form is knowledge, descends with love to meet Him, the Flame, the Flame!

Lo, He opens wide His jaws, the son of strength, the priest of our sacrifice. He has come to drink our claries and our honeys, well pleased with our works.

Lo, He blazes up, shouting, the messenger of the Gods and the General-in-Chief of their wars. And He has made our life His sacred shrine, this valiant son of the Virgin Eternal.

Lo, He has summoned all the Gods,—Varuna the Wide, Mitra the Harmonious, Aryaman the Puis-

[1]This is one of the poems inspired by the hymns of Rig Veda.

sant, and Bhaga the Enjoyer; also the splendours of the whirlwind and the twin Mind-vitalities and the luminous thunderbolt. He has summoned them to attend our works.

Lo, the Gods stand in front of us to receive our oblations. Now, indeed, there is no death nor foe. Now, indeed, we have found the supreme good.

Lo, the Goddesses, too, are arriving, led by Her whose name is Vision and her sister Inspiration. And, behold, He too is here, the Highest, the son of Truth.

Welcome, ye gods, take all our offerings—our milk and ghee, our rice and soma-wine. Shining ye stand forth, O Immortal Powers, and accept our works for ascent.

Blessed are we and, freed from all evil, we have attained to the eternal felicity. For the Gods have drunk our soma-wine and have given us Light, their highest gift.

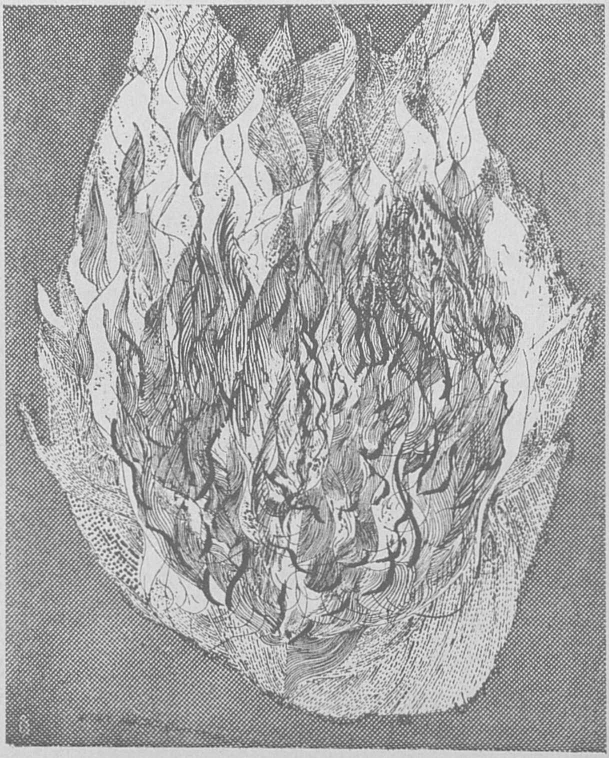
And Fire, our flaming priest, has now pervaded the three worlds in us—our bodies, vitalities and minds. And the Gods have stretched forth their hands for our grasping. And their blessings we have received.

Lo, the whole world is a sacrifice, everywhere the Immortals shine and everywhere is blazing the Flame, the Flame. This delight will last for ever, for immortality is ours already.

Come now, let us sing: Live the Immortals, live the sacrifice and may humanity reach the good! Live the Earth and live the Heavens and may He live for ever, the Flame, the Flame, the Flame.

—BHARATI

Engal velvik-kooda meedil



(36)

HYMN TO THE SUN

Over the ocean spreading your rays,
Brisk you ascend the sky, O Lord.
Tasting the brightening heaven's sweetness
Birds rejoice and sing sweet songs.

Each little drop in the ocean vast
Becomes an eye to swallow up
Your countenance bright, a tongue to sing
Your praise and swell the chorus of joy.

May my heart like the ocean be
For ever illumined by your rays,
My every thought shine like a drop
Filled and lit up with your own brightness,
So that my life may find fulfilment.

O God whose radiance the sun spreads
Who in high heaven enthroned looks down
On the whole Earth and gives her life,
You look at her with steady eyes
As if you are in love with her,
And doubtless she too, this fair Earth,
Is headily in love with you.

How fresh, how sweet the smile that plays
Upon her face bathed in your light!
Our primal Father and Mother are ye.
To you I bow a thousand times.

—K.S.

Kadalin meedu

(37)

QUESTIONS

Does one make a well-strung harp
And throw it in the dust to go
To waste? Speak, Siva-Sakti, speak!

Me, you created with a mind
Afire, alit. And will you not
Give me the strength to match and make it
Fruitful for this country's sake?
Or will you let me languish,
A burden on the earth?

Resilient like a ball, a body
Obedient to the will, I pray for;
A mind free from desire, a life
Perennially refreshed, a heart
That sings your praise even when a flame
Consumes the flesh, I pray for;
An intellect, still, steady, calm, I pray for;
From granting these my prayers, what
Prevents you, Siva-Sakti, what?

—K.S.

Nalladoor veenai

(38)

PRAYER TO MOTHER

May my intentions be fulfilled,
May these intentions be auspicious.
May my heart be strong and my mind clear.

Like morning dew before the Sun
May all my sins now disappear
Before you here, O Mother dear!

—K.S.

Enniya mudidal vendum

(39)

AUM SAKTI

Hard gemlike flame, the hero's sword,
Justice which fills the heart with strength.
Her glance destroys all pains, as fire
Destroys a wisp of cotton.
Renouncing fraud, deceit and hate,
O people of the world, in Her
Find sanctuary, in Her whose name
Is Sakti, Aum Sakti, Aum Sakti, Aum!

Proclaim, O drum, to all seven worlds:
"Mistress both of good and evil,
She will do us only good;
Evil shall disappear." Beyond
Utterance is Her might. And yet
Those who utter it She will free
From every grief and make them godlike,
She is Aum Sakti, Aum Sakti, Aum!

Today we make this creed our own,
The faith we live by; Faith alone
Will save us, Faith and Faith alone.
I bow to you, O mind, if you
Forever and ever to Sakti bow,
No arrow, no fire, no poison, no sickness
Can daunt us, for this word gives life

To heaven and earth alike, this Aum,
Aum Sakti, Aum Sakti, Aum!

Pour down gold showers and power electric
On us who sing Your praise. All shackles
We have shaken off and now
Invoke you as Mother Sakti supreme.
Obey Her, mind, no other task
Is yours but such obedience.
Let us again sing this refrain,
Aum Sakti, Aum Sakti, Aum!

Essence of the Vedas! shining
On the white lotus! Goddess of clear
Tamil! Vani! this alone
I ask of you. Let not a single
Moment of my time be wasted.
Descend in floods upon my tongue
And let me sing Vel Sakti Vel[1]
Sakti Vel Sakti Vel!

—K.S.

Nenjukku neediyum

[1]Javelin, the weapon of Kumara, the commander-in-chief of the gods

(40)

THE DANCE OF DISSOLUTION

Bursts the universe, thunder keeping time,
Bare and blood-soaked plains provide the stage;
On these the devils sing in glee, and you
Kali, Mother, Kangali, Chamundi,
Your sounding feet interpreting the song,

The Dance of Dissolution dance in joy
Involving me too in that Devil Dance.

All five elements now dissolved made one,
And that one tamed, submerged in Sakti potent,
A dazzling brightness which blinds thought itself
As with the speed of lightning, belching fire,
You dance your dance ever-lasting, Kali, Mother,
Involving me too in that Devil Dance.

All space in ruins, striking awareness dead,
All paths destroyed through which the Powers act,
In utter chaos crying "Ho, ho, ho",
The demons wander, and you frenzied dance
Destroying all and roaring, Kali, Mother
Involving me too in that Devil Dance.

Demons headlong their heads bashing, dashing
Quickly crashing, smashing, beating time,
With your flaming eyes in eight directions
You shoot fire consuming all creation
As you continue dancing, Kali, Mother
Involving me too in that Devil Dance.

Collapse the three worlds, and with them Time itself;
Remains alone God's splendour in His trance.
In His great Peace your wrath evaporates.
Your hand takes His, cajoling, coaxing, loving,
And your wild dance is now a Dance of Bliss
Involving me too in it, Kali, Mother!

—P.S.S.

Vedi padum andattu

(41)

HYMN OF PRAISE

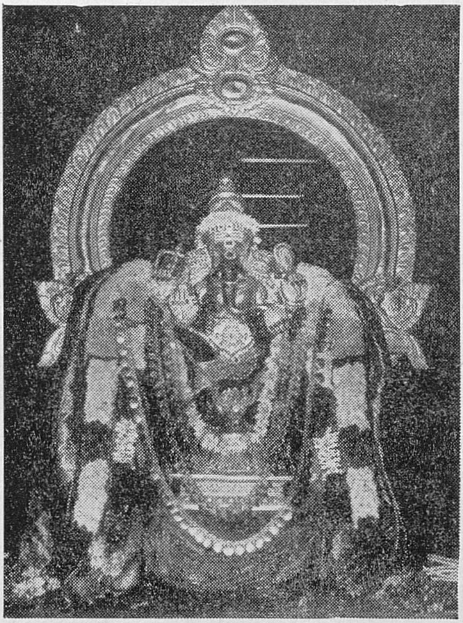
Praise to you who, the three worlds
Make, change, sweep out, augment and guard!
As fruits by sweetness, wind by movement,
So all things are by you pervaded.
To you who shine as the Universe,
Mother, Nectar praise to you;
Freshness in the new, ripeness in the old,
Life of life, life even in death :
The Being in all beings, and within me
"I", the undying flame expanding
This "I" changing it into the Self;
Sea of medicine for the cure of care;
Bright sun dispelling morbid darkness;
Shining jewel in the crown of sages
Who have transcended "I" and "mine".
Praise to you, O Mother, who stands for ever,
As deed, motive, mind, awareness.
Bliss I ask for, give it! Pain I hate
Remove it. Nectar I crave for, Sakti,
Mother, Mukti, Silence, praise to you.
Death abhorred, avert it! Praise to you.

—K.S.

Potri ulakoru moonraiyum

(42)

TO VINAYAKA[1]



What are our duties? Self-control:
Ending others' suffering: seeking others' welfare:
Worship of that one Guardian of the world
Who is God Vinayaka, Kumara the javelin-wielder,

[1]Another name for Ganesa, one of the major deities of the Hindu pantheon. Regarded as the god of wisdom and success and the remover of all obstacles (Vignesa), Vinayaka, according to scriptures, is worshipped not only by mortals but even by the gods. The photograph above is that of the 'Manakkula' Vinayaka in Pondicherry. Subramania Bharati used to go to this temple often. (Photo—courtesy: Pondicherry Government)

Narayana, Siva with the river in his matted locks,
The same whose names elsewhere
Are Allah, Jehovah:
The Being who is also loved
As Lakshmi, Bharati and Uma—
These are the four obligations binding
Every person on this earth.
And four are the fruits that follow:
Dharma, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*.[1]

Hence, Manakkula Vinayaka,
Master of heavenly mystery,
Grant to me, I pray, the strength and skill
Of self-control. For this gift gained,
All other gifts ensue unsought.
Grant me firm courage. Then wishing
For happiness for all living beings,
With worship of Your Feet my sole vocation,
God Ganapati, I shall live in joy.

* * *

My vocation, poetry; the service
Of the country; work incessant
With unwearied zeal.
To these three tasks attend, O mind.
Ganapati, Uma's son, will mind
The welfare of our family.

* * *

Calm in action, those with devotion
Wait in patience for the slow
Growth and fruition of the seed they sow.

---

[1]Responsible behaviour, wordly prosperity, pleasures and freedom.

Since everything is Sakti's work,
Why should we, Her vassals, worry?
Lord of knowledge, Ganapati,
Employ me to serve noble ends.

* * *

Things ineffable, I dare to speak of.
Boons unheard of, these I seek.
God of gods, I pray, ordain
That all people on earth, birds, beasts, worms,
Plants and trees should through my actions
Cease from suffering and live
Happily in loving harmony.

On the zenith of jnana's heaven standing
I shout: "On earth let love and calm
Forbearance shine for ever!
Let pain and penury, sickness and death,
Vanish and let all creatures live
In bliss!" Listen, O Lord, to this my prayer
And in compassion grant it.

Say, O Lord, say "So be it".
Grant this boon to me today,
This instant here and now.
O primal source, son of Infinite Sakti,
Moon-crowned lord eternal,
To you surrendered, in you
I take refuge, I, your slave.

—K.S.

Excerpts from *Vinayakar Naanmani Maalai*

(43)

IN PRAISE OF SARASWATI

On the white lotus flower she is,
In vina's music and the heart
Of poets spreading joyous sweetness;
She shines within the Vedas chanted
As Being sought and realized,

The inner meaning of the words
Uttered by pure, compassionate sages.

In the sweet songs by women sung
And in the innocent prattle of children,
In koel's throat and parrot's tongue;
In the deft, flawless workmanship
Of temple, tower and all beauteous things.
Her body bright is sweetness and bliss.

She is the guardian deity of toilers
Who earn their bread by innocent work,
Clean merchants, kings and learned men,
Goddess of knowledge to whom all seekers
Of knowledge look for sanctuary.

* * *

In every house the light of learning,
In every street a school or two;
Throughout the land in every town
And city a multitude of schools;
Burning down a town where seekers
Of knowledge find no place of learning;
These are the ways to gain the grace
Of our Mother immortal who destroys
All evil by the nectar of knowledge.

* * *

Raising groves of rare fruit trees,
Digging wells and tanks for water,
Founding *dharmasalas* and temples
And such other charities that bring
Great glory to one's name for ever,
None of these has merit like

Making yonder poor man literate.

Ye wealthy ones, give heaps of gold;
Those not so rich, give some few pice;
Poor paupers, give a few kind words;
Strong ones, give your labour free.
Women whose speech is honey sweet
Speak in praise of Goddess Vani.
Giving and doing all we can,
Let us plant and tend this tree,
The service of Saraswati.

—K.S.

Vellait-taamarai

LAKSHMI

(The Goddess of Wealth)

An Affirmation

Come, let us affirm the Energy of Vishnu, the Jewel of
the Crimson Flower, and end this want,
Where the mind ever struggles in the fumes of paltriness,
And Reason so faints that the noblest truths do but
vex her.
We can endure this no more.
So let us take refuge in the feet of the Mother,
Lakshmi.
The discourtesies of the low, the kinship with those
who have failed;
The extinction of endeavours like lamps that are
drowned in a well;
The denial of fruits even when the seven seas are
crossed;
To such things does want subject us, this worst of
Earth's tyrannies;
Down with it.
She is born of the inner Ocean of Milk;
She is sweet like the nectar of Heaven, twin-born with her,
And her shining feet repose aptly on lotus petals.
'Multiple riches she holds in her hands which are
four, the Goddess whose eyes are gleaming azure;
Ruddy her form and verdant is her love.
Seated beside Love, in Heaven on the bosom of Vishnu

GODDESS LAKSHMI

—Drawing by R. Sarangan

Himself, on the Earth her dwellings are many.
We find her revealed
In the festooned halls of marriage;
Amid flocks, and in jewelled palaces;
In the hero's arm, in the sweating toil of labour,
And, ay! on the crown of knowledge,
Extending the light of her bounties.
Come, let us sing her praises, bless her feet, and climb
the heights of power;
Behold her in gold and in gems, in flower and incense;
In the lamp and the virgin's smile;
In luxuriant woodlands, groves and fields,
In the Will that dares,
And in royal lineaments.
And firm let us seat her in our minds and speech,
Her who is revealed
In underground mines,
And the slopes of the hills, and depths of the seas;
In the righteous sacrifice;
In fame and in talent, and novelty;
In statue and portrait, in song and in dance,
Dedicate unto her grace all knowledge that you have;
Attain to her splendours, and vanquish dire want;
Rise high in the world by joyous affirmation of Lakshmi
who is revealed
In conquering armies and the traffic of the far-sighted.
In self-control, and ay! in the harmonious lays of her
poet-votaries.
Come, let us affirm the Energy of Vishnu, the Jewel
of the Crimson Flower!

—SUBRAMANIA BHARATI

Maadavan saktiyinai

(45)

JESUS CHRIST

"God came down and died on the cross,
And on the third day rose again.
Loving Mary Magdalene
With her own eyes saw these things happen."
So says the Bible. Listen, O world,
To its true inner meaning.
God will enter our body and save
Us from destruction for ever and ever
If only we destroy our ego.

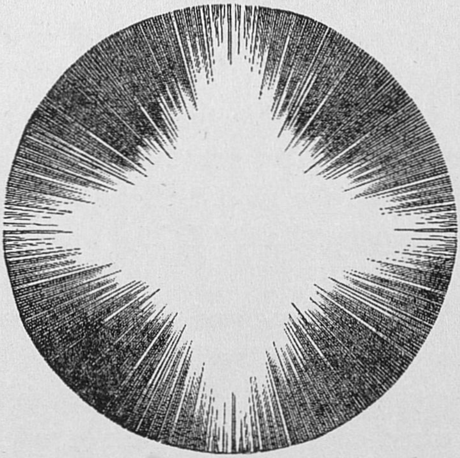
Look, Love is Mary Magdalene
And the pure Spirit Jesus Christ.
If first we kill the evil in us
A good new life springs forth full soon.
Beholding its beautiful golden face
Love that is Mary Magdalene
Cherishes and clings to this good life.
Ah! this is happiness indeed!

Fix the mind on the cross of Truth,
And strike it with the nails of *tapas*,
The living glory of Jesus Christ
Shines in the body's firmament.
Womanhood, Love eternal, Mary
Is guarded by *dharma*, Jesus Christ.

The meaning, subtle to see, is yet
Easy to put into practice this instant.

—K.S.

Eesan vandu siluvayil



(46)

ALLAH[1]

Allah! Allah! Allah!
Effulgence bright beyond the reach
Of mind or speech,
The Lord supreme who has decreed
Out of His grace
That, in illimitable space,
A million million worlds should roll
Unceasingly in all directions,
He is Allah! Allah! Allah!

All, all who come and worship Him,
He saves, destroying fear of Death.
Though they may be unlearned, false
Of speech and lacking penance, wicked,
Breaking every rule of conduct
Taught by the good, all all He saves
From fear of Death, Allah! Allah! Allah!

—K.S.

Allaa Allaa Allaa

[1]This was recited by Bharati on June 20, 1920 in an assembly of Muslims in Pottal Pudur (Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu) where he spoke on the glory of Islam. For gist of the address, *vide* item in Part II of this book.

(47)

TO THE SUPREME BEING

Siva, pure white, silent, crowned
With the white flower and the crescent moon;
Vishnu, dark-hued, lying recumbent
On the Milky Ocean; He who revealed
To Prophet Muhammad the Truth; the Father
Of Jesus; the Being supreme adored,
Known and unknown in various forms
By various creeds, is One Alone.
Awareness radiant is Its nature.
Those who see It see the end
Of suffering and sorrow. Let us pray
For Its grace and gain immortal life.

—K.S.

Aatti soodi ilampirai

(48)

PRAISE OF KANNAN[1]

How comes it, noble Kanna, you taste sour
In unripe fruit, sweet in the ripe?
How comes it you lie low when sick
But quick revive for penance brisk?
Cool in the breeze, how comes it, Kanna,
That in the fire you feel so hot?
Turbid in the puddle, noble Kanna,
How comes it that you shine so clear
Transparent in the sky?
By all you are praised and worshipped, but
How comes it, Kanna, that you hasten
To protect the weak and helpless?
Those who honour you you protect,
But those dishonest you destroy.
Praise, praise to you, noble Kanna,
Here I stand before you, Kanna,
Praising your golden Feet, O Kanna.

—K.S.

Kayile pulippatenne

---

[1]This is one of the poems Bharati composed in the year of his death (1921). He sang it in the presence of his fellow-patriot and philosopher V.V.S. Iyer (1881-1925). Kannan is a Tamil name for Lord Krishna.

(49)

THE BAMBOO FLUTE

Wherefrom does this music come?
O friend, who makes this sweet music?
From the hill top does it come,
Or from a tree's bough?
Or does this mind-enchanting music
From the open spaces come?
From Yamuna divine, whose waves
Make music, does it come? Or does it
Rise from some garden's rustling leaves,
This music nectar-sweet?
Or could there be a bird anear
Which sings this song so fiery-sweet?
Do unseen beings like *Kinnaras* pluck
This music from some instruments?
O friend, 'tis only Kannan's flute
Whose notes with sweetness fill the ear,
With poison fill the heart, those arrows
Which he aims at us poor maidens
To make us pine for him, O friend.

—K.S.

Engirundu varuokuvado

(50)

NANDALALA

In the feather of the crow,
Your blackness you show,
Nandalala!

In all trees that are seen
I see your complexion green,
Nandalala!

In every sound heard by the ear
Your music I hear
Nandalala!

If I put my finger in the fire
I feel the sweetness of your touch,
Nandalala.

—K.S.

Kakkaich-chirakinile

(51)

KRISHNA—MY MOTHER

The Realms of Life are Her bounteous breasts; and consciousness her milk of endless delight, which She yieldeth into my lips unasked; such grace is my Mother's.

They call her Krishna. Ah, she has clasped me in fond embrace with her arms of ethereal space ! And, placing me on her lap of Earth, she loves to tell me endless stories, strange and mysterious.

And some of the tales I call by the name of pleasures, evolutions, victories. Yet others come to me as pains, defeats and falls; stories, all these, that my Mother recounts to suit my various moods and stages, lovingly told, ever entrancing.

And many are the wondrous toys and dolls which my Mother showeth me:

There is one that is named the Moon, and it sheds a nectar-like flood of light. And there are herds and herds of clouds, many-coloured toys, yielding rain. There is the Sun too, foremost of my playthings, the beauty of whose face I have no words to depict.

Toys, toys, toys—
A heavenful of stars, sparkling like tiny gems.

Many a time, but in vain, have I essayed to count them all. And then those green hills, that never stir from their places, silent toys, offering speechless play.

Rivers and rivulets, fair and playful, that wander all over the land and, in the end, flow into that marvellous toy, yon ocean, wide and boundless-seeming, with dashing billows, spouts of spray and its long, continuous chant wherein my Mother's name is ever sounded: Om, Om, O......m.

Groves and gardens abounding in many-hued gems of flowers; and delicious fruits hanging on the trees, strong in essence, rich in form. Ah, the world is full of such exquisite playthings. All these, my Mother has given me.

Nice things to eat and songs all sweetness to hear, and companions gifted, like me, with minds, to play with and become one with; and these fair girls, enkindling love, that passion of flaming delight like fiery nectar, killing-sweet.

Yet more play-mates:

The winged birds, the beasts that walk the earth and countless fishes of many and many a kind, there, in that thundering Sea.

What a tale of raptures, too many even to think of!

And endless sciences and arts she has ordained and, nobler than all these, divine wisdom—for my serious hours.

But when the lighter mood is on me and I would fain laugh and be merry, many are the jokes she has planned to amuse me with : the lies of priests, the comic feats of kings, the hypocrisies of age and the silly cares of youth.

Whatever I demand, she gives, my Mother. Aye, she hastens with gifts, ere I tell her I'd like to have them.

With high grace does she protect me, and says she will make me a yogin, like Arjuna, my brother in race.

Always and in all places, my work shall be to sing of the bounteous love of my Mother.

And a long and shining life and other matchless glories, she will grant me as reward—Krishna, My Mother.

—Subramania Bharati

Unna unna tevittaade

(52)

KANNAN—MY SERVANT

Forgetting every generous bonus,
They still pile up demands upon us.
When work is heaviest, on that day,
Quiet, at home they stay away.
"Why were you absent yesterday?"
We ask; and we are answered duly:
"A scorpion in a pot, Sir, truly
Bit me with its teeth most cruelly!
My good wife, Sir, the best of women,
Was sore possessed by an evil demon!
It was the twelfth day ceremony
After the death of my poor granny!"

Such disobedience, and lies in dozens;
Such whispering in corners with our dear cousins!
Our inner chamber's small disgraces
Loud they proclaim in public places.
They tell the world with drumbeats—yes, ah me!
If we run somewhat short of sesame.

Yes; trouble and bother are all we gather
From servants; and yet we would far rather
Have a bad servant than none at all;
For without servants no work is done at all!

To me thus musing, sad and serious,
Came a lad from somewhere mysterious.
"I'm a shepherd", he said; and on he did rattle—
"Your children I'd cherish and graze your cattle;
Your house I'd sweep, your lamps I'd light,
And all your biddings do always right;
I'd keep with care your jewels and clothes;
And lovely lullabies I'd compose
And sing them; and dance and play, it may be,
To the great delight of little baby.
On robber-infested paths of the forest,
By day or night, in straits the sorest,
With you I'd wander and guard you from harm,
An artless, unlettered rustic, I am;
Yet something of fencing, boxing, wrestling
I know; but nothing at all of embezzling!"

He paused for breath. At once I spoke,
"Say, what is your name?" He answered, "Folk
Call me Kannan, not much of a name!"

Stalwart he stood there, firm of frame,
With eyes gleaming goodness and words that
    bound him
To me for ever in love. "I've found him,"
I told myself, "the Boy I've been after."
For my heart was filled with silent laughter.
And turning to him, I said half-taunting,
"Tall is your talk and full of vaunting.
You swear I'd find it most advantageous
To be your master; but, what are your wages?"

"Young though I look, I have lived for ages
With no wedded wife, no children to earn for.
Your love is enough; it is love I yearn for,
Not lucre!" he said in a voice impassioned.

Overjoyed I engaged this foolish, old-fashioned
Fellow to serve me. Since then, I own,
The lad's love for us has, day by day, grown;
And the good he has done no words can render.
As the eyelids guard—alert and tender—
The eyes, he tends my family.
Not once have I heard him grumble. But he
Sweeps the street and cleans the rooms;
And even the housemaids he presumes
To chide and control! And to my children,
A tutor, nurse, doctor, he does bewildering
Services manifold. He buys plenty
Of milk and butter and all things dainty
And stocks my pantry, somehow or other.
To the women he is like a loving mother;
And to me a friend, guide, teacher, brother.
A seeming servant, in deed a god,
This shepherd lad, from somewhere abroad,
Has come to me—for my merit's reward!
When did I do such penance hard?

From the hour that Kannan set his foot
Upon my doorstep, I have put
Away from me all thought and care.
My burdens are now his to bear.
Wealth, youth, strength, honour and renown,
Learning, wisdom, poetry, the crown

Of Shiva-yoga, Shiva-jnana's clear,
Calm brightness, overwhelm me here.
Oh! joy, that as a servant-boy
Kannan I took in my employ!
I've seen, I've seen with my own eye
His splendour. Yet I wonder why,
Why should Kannan serve me? Why?

—K.S.

Kooli mihak-ketpaar

(53)

KANNAN—MY DISCIPLE

Me he became and also another
Us two together, the same yet apart:
Kannan the Juggler (Who knows his intent?)—
As if he was less discerning than I,
As if he needed my aid, my efforts
As if through taking me for his model
And heeding my words he could improve himself!
As if he really thought my poems
And my intelligence were superior—
Me he sought, that rogue Kannan,
As a teacher, O Lord, for him the disciple!

Fool that I was I fell in that net
And the things that I went through—
An epic of woes!

My ego unconquered, unabandoned
I was unable to conquer the world
Or to set anyone above my self
And see him in beatitude.
No inner clarity nor joy abiding
Was mine. To punish my folly
In trying to mend all lives on this earth
Remove their sorrow and make them happy
The Juggler Kannan forced himself on me;

Praised me, lauded my poems,
Put me in great conceit of myself.

To the good old granny chewing her gums
This was a most acceptable bon-bon!
I plied him with many and detailed
instructions:
"Don't do this", "Avoid that",
"Never talk thus", "Don't wish for those",
"This you must learn, that you mustn't",
"Make friends with these, run after those."
In such teachings unceasing I spent my life.

Like the shrew in the story on purpose perverse
Whatever I taught him he did the reverse!
With my small mind I set great store
By the praise and regard of men of the world
And the respectable lives that all of them led.
Not only did Kannan curiously shun
The paths that I showed him with such concern
But I saw to my sorrow his deliberate indulgence
In habits and manners to disgust the world
And make him on all sides blamed and despised.

Day by day in his distressing ways
Excelling himself he soon reached a stage
When elders and ancient crones in the streets
Thought him a madcap, scoffed at him
And mingled their pity with derision.

The whelming sorrow that rose in my heart
Cannot be told. That the world should call

The youth whom I sought to make a Superman
A crackpot, cut my heart in two,
With many rules of conduct, stratagems, scriptures,
I bored Kannan through and through.
Even if I failed to take him to godhead
I was determined that he should not
Lose his manhood and perish. And so
With angry words that boiled and burnt
Jocular, biting, laughing, scornful,
In many and various ways I tried
To save Kannan and bring him over.
In vain.

Mad and savage, unmindful of aught,
Apathetic to every issue,
Like an ape, a bear, a horned devil,
Abstracted, vacant, unheeding he stood.
By this
My pride and ego a thousand times hurt
Enraged beyond measure, "By some means or other
I'll see Kannan cured," I said.
I was possessed by this passion and thought
"If somehow I can find him a job
Fix him up somewhere even by force
He will be cured."

Thinking thus and waiting my chance
One day I took Kannan aside
Into my house and said, "My son,
Boundless for me your love and regard,
Relying on it I would ask you a favour
Which you must do. Men's deeds, you see,

Gain lustre by company. Except the time
Spent in earning my life's means
It is good for me that I should always
Be with those that study the Shastras,
Engage in discussions, find their happiness
In getting into the heart of poesy.
Barring you I know none sensible
Eager to spend all his time with me.
Hence
For my good and as my help
Stay with me a while, I beg you,
Don't refuse and plunge me in sorrow,
Agree to this."
"So be it," said Kannan, "but without work
I will not remain idle with you.
Show me a job and I stay."
Knowing his nature and his ability,
"Transcribe daily my poems in fair.
Do that," I said. "Right," he replied,
And stood there maybe a half hour and then
"Let me go," he said. Annoyed I gave him
An old tale and ordered, "Write this out fair."
As if agreeing he took it in hand
And stood for a minute. "I must go," he said.
Enraged I replied, "You go back on your word?
Not then for nothing do men call you mad."
To which he replied, "I'll do this tomorrow."
"Will you do this at once here and now
Or won't you?" I growled. "Reply in one word."
In one word without batting an eyelid he said, "No."
My rage blazing up, a flood overflowing,
Eyes red, lids throbbing, I shouted in wrath,

"Hence, wretch, avaunt, never for a moment
Let me see you again. Never again
In this world come near me. Go, go, go,"
I thundered at him. Up rose Kannan
And went. My eyes filled with tears,
"O my son," I said, "Go and good go with you!
The gods protect you! Thinking to improve you
I did many things. I am utterly vanquished,
Out-manoeuvred. Don't come back.
Go and prosper."
Calmly without sorrow I bade him good-bye.
Kannan went and in a second
Brought from somewhere a good pen
And copied aright the part I had shown him.
"Sir, in all things I shall go your way,
Perform all tasks. No more shall sorrow
Come to you through me." Many things else
Of good import he said, laughed and vanished!

And the next second the Kannan that went
Rose in my heart and said these words:
"Son, it is not for you to create,
Change or destroy. The moment you said
That you were vanquished, that moment you won.
Whatever you want to do in this world
Do it uncraving and without wrath.
So will you prosper. Farewell," he said.
Prosper for ever and fare well he!

—P.S.S.

Yaaneyaaki

Lord Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu, playing on the flute
(From a stone pillar in Ramaswami temple, Kumbakonam, South India)

—*Courtesy* : Archaeological Survey of India

(54)

KANNAN—MY LOVER

Like a worm on a fish-hook, a flame unprotected,
For a long, long while my heart throbbed in anguish;
Like a caged bird did I in loneliness languish.
All things it had longed for my mind now rejected.

And as on the mat I lay alone
The sight of my mother herself made me weary.
Your chatter, my dear girls, I found endless, dreary.
Like maladies I dreaded you, friends my own.

Of food, of sleep, I took no thought.
Perfumes repelled me and blossoms vexed.
My temper was fitful : by all things perplexed,
Never a glimpse of comfort I caught.

Milk was bitter. My down-bed hurt badly.
My gay parrot's prattle pierced my ear.
"No hope!" declared four doctors, severe.
"Ill-starred!" the astrologer added sadly.

In a dream, on a day, beyond men's sight,
One touched my bosom, I knew not who.
I opened my eyes. He had vanished from view.
But in my heart was a strange delight!

My brain became cool: straight my frame.
My home and each chamber their music resumed.
Desire was born and joy again bloomed.
Fear fled, my friend, and beauty came.

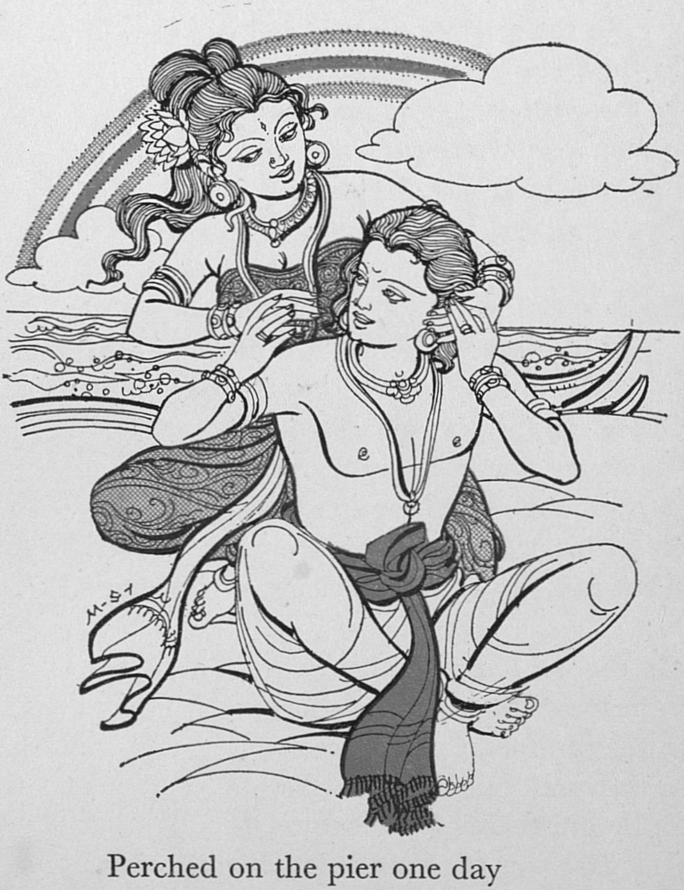
From the spot his hand did once surprise,
A sweetness, a great, new peace there grew.
I wondered and wondered, "Who could it be, who?"
And Kannan stood before my eyes!

—K.S.

Toondir-puzhuvinaippol

(55)

KANNAMMA MY BELOVED
("Eyes covered from behind")



Perched on the pier one day
I gazed at the sea and the sky;
Saw the wide circle on high
Clasping and kissing the bay.

Lost in that crowded blue
And rapturous dreams not a few,
Of pleasure I had my fill
While Time seemed to stand still.

Suddenly came from behind
    Someone who closed both my eyes.
    In the scent of the silk and its rise,
In the feel of those hands so refined,
In the gush of my joy upclimbing,
In our heartbeats' perfect timing,
I knew who it was. "This feat
Can't fool me, Kannamma, my sweet!"

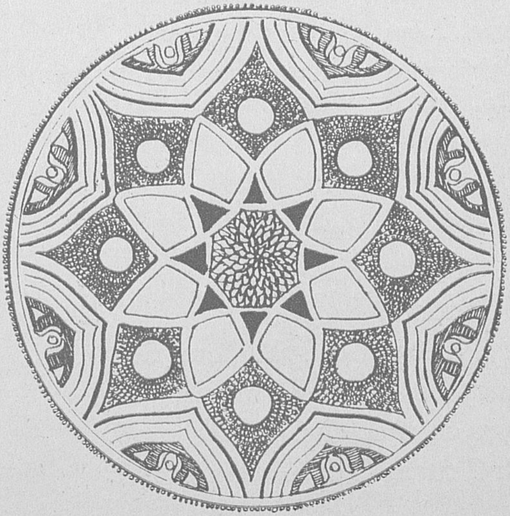
She laughed and I put her hands back
    And hugged her. "Now out with your news."
    "What found you so lost in your views
Of sea, sky, waves and cloud rack?
What saw you in the spun foam?
In the bubbles, in heaven's blue dome?
Bit by bit, taking your measure,
What gained you of knowledge or pleasure?"

"In the sea I saw your face;
In heaven's blue rim your face;
In the spun foam your face;
In the small bubbles your face;
Bit by bit, taking my measure,
Your face was my knowledge and pleasure.

You laughed, and in a tight embrace
We stand now, face to face!"

—P.S.S.

Maalaip pozhudiloru



(56)

IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS

Thou to me the flowing Light,
And I to thee, discerning sight;
Honied blossom thou to me,
Bee enchanted I to thee:
O Heavenly Lamp with shining ray,
O Krishna, Love, O nectar-spray,
With falt'ring tongue and words that pant
Thy glories, here, I strive to chant.

Thou to me the Harp of gold,
And I to thee the finger bold;
Necklace shining thou to me,
New-set diamond I to thee:
O mighty queen with splendour rife,
O Krishna, Love, O well of life,
Thine eyes do shed their light on all,
Wherev'r I turn, their beams do fall.

Rain that singeth, thou to me,
Peacock dancing, I to thee;
Thou to me the juice of grape,
And I to thee the cup agape;
O spotless Beauty, Krishna bright
Perennial fount of deep delight,
O Love, thy face hath grace divine,

For there the deathless Truth doth shine.

Silver moonlight thou to me,
Exulting ocean I to thee;
Thou, the basic harmony
And I the Song that moveth free:
Dear as eyesight, Krishna mine,
O massed-up, sweet, immortal wine,
Unceasing yearns my mind to scan
Thy endless charm, but never can.

Inlaid perfume thou to me,
Petalled blossom I to thee:
Thou to me the inner Thought,
And I to thee the word it wrought;
O honeyed Hope, O Krishna fair,
O Joy, o'erflowing everywhere,
O Star of love, do teach me, pray,
To sing thy praise in fitting lay.

Deep Attraction thou to me,
Living magnet I to thee;
Thou to me the Veda pure
And I to thee the Knowledge sure;
Voice vibrant of the world's desire,
O Krishna, Love, all-quickening fire,
In utter stillness, here, I see
Thy face that yieldeth ecstasy.

As life to pulse, and gold to rings,
As star to planet, Soul to things,
So Krishna, Love, art thou to me,

Thou, the Force, I, Victory;—
And all the joys of Heaven and Earth
In thee, O Krishna, have their birth,
Eternal glory, endless Might
O Heart of Mine, O Light, O Light!

—SUBRAMANIA BHARATI

Paayum oli nee yenakku

(57)

BHARATI SIXTYSIX[1]

PRAISE BE—IN PRAISE OF SAKTI

Many *siddhas*[2] there were before me,
I too am a *siddha*;
The one who writes all this
Seated in my mind
Is that almighty
Ruler of the earth
The mind's jewel:
Into a lotus fresh as the morning
For love's sake she has turned herself,
And me
Into a bee
Sucking her.

---

[1]So called because the poem consists of 66 stanzas (of which only 30 are translated here). This unfinished narrative is in the nature of a spiritual self-exploration. At the outset, the mind ponders over the problem of problems, Death.

[2]Mystics (traditionally numbering 18) in the Tamil land of 14th-16th centuries A.D., who shunned external rituals and revelled in the omnipresent universal Self as formless Siva, singing their bliss in breezy, and at times bizarre, poetry. For Bharati's article in English on Siddhas, *vide* Part II, item 52.

THE WAY TO CONQUER DEATH

To the golden feet I bow
And declare the truths I know:
All life, our fathers said, is God
And this as the final truth I took.
They said, but what did they do?
Can an advaitin die?
All those *siddhas* of the past
Are finished, are dead, are turned to dust!

* * * *

Why prick and probe a wound?
The Buddha died diseased,
The Brahmin Sankara[1] died,
And Ramanuja[2] followed suit.

Jesus died on a cross
Krishna died of an arrow
The much praised Rama drowned himself
Me you will find immortal!
This truth you have got cheap
Not I the one to lie
Not even should I die
Listen to me, listen.

---

[1]788-820 A.D. The great thinker who established the philosophy of *Advaita* (Non-dualism).

[2]1017-1137 A.D. The philosopher of Vaishnavism who established *Visishtadvaita* (Modified non-dualism).

THE DEVILS

There shall be for man
No sorrow and no death
Would he but destroy
Shame and care, lies and rage
Fear, yearning
Death too he would destroy.

The rest I shall tell later
But kill rage first
You will have no more death on earth;
We forget that great word
To look on others' goods as trash
To see God in everything
And the fire of wrath
Blazes in our hearts.

THE ILLS OF WRATH

The angry burn themselves and die
Themselves the knives that cut their throats
Men die daily in millions out of wrath
Raging against others
Careworn
They plunge themselves in a sea of sorrow.
It is great Sakti's aid we need
With that we have no worry
Not in our hands is deathlessness
Isn't our birth because of her?
Let me tell you in simple Tamil

Do but listen
He who made us will nourish us
With a cool mind rejoice and live
And let the world go hang!

NO WHINING

What matters if Cancer and Capricorn
Change places
And the world spins
Upside down?
If poison cannot kill us
What else matters?
We shall live, don't whine
Useless is whining
Crores and crores died of it
Fear naught on earth evermore!

GREAT IS PATIENCE

On Tirutani[1] sits enthroned
Kumaran our God
And what do you think it signifies?
Tirutani is divine patience
That is what the Tamil means
To bear and to forbear is wisdom
That the patient will rule the earth
Is an ancient saying in Tamil
With much sense in it

[1]Sacred "Tanikai" (stillness, patience); name of a Skanda shrine in North Arcot District of Tamil Nadu.

He that endures on earth
Is a god.

Yudhishthira son of Dharma
A long while guarded patience.
Losing it at the end
He waged war with those younger
Scorched our land in the battlefield
Set up want and sorrow
And left for the hills and the sky.

Is it not cruel
To contrive unnatural death
To living beings on earth?
How can one give up
Sweet life?
The cause of death
If you want to know
Says that great botanist
Jagadish Chandra Bose[1]
Ripe in wisdom and experience
Is "shock to the nerves".

Anger shocks the nerves
Great anger shocks them greatly
Even a small anger
Is dangerous
Fear weakens the nerves
Sorrow tears them asunder
Care boils and burns them

---

[1] 1858-1937; Indian scientist who *inter alia* made known the inner activities of plant life.

Hence it is I say
Quell wrath and so quell the rest.

THE MESSAGE

Next door was a ruin
The great yogi gave me
A gracious look
Showed me an abandoned well
The sun on high
And its image in a well.
"Do you understand?"
"I do."
In great joy he went
And I
Had glimpsed a root
Of the tree of Vedanta.

The message Desikan[1] delivered
By word and deed
I shall in clear terms
Tell the world
"Control your breath by *pranayama*
And live like a clod, a wall;
As you see the bright sun in a well
So in yourself you will see God
Not exposition
But experience leading to bliss
Is true philosophy.

---

[1]Preceptor. The reference is to Kullachami (*vide* next page).

Were I bent on a treatise
All this I would set out at length
And expound.
He showed me the sky
Said the love of the bright-eyed Goddess
Alone was the way of life here
And much knowledge else he gave me
Infinite his hints
My great philosopher and guide
Never taken in by the false
A god on earth
Kullachami.[1]

Another day
With a huge load on his back
Of rags and dirty linen
Came before me the compassionate sage
The blessed feet
Which the wise worshipped.
Smiling I asked him
"What is this, my lord?
What utter lunacy!
Why the load?"

He too smiled and said
"I bear my load on the outside
You your rubbish within"
Saying which he vanished.
I caught the point of his words.
Their minds laden with old lies

[1]A mad-looking mendicant of few words and immense wisdom, whom Bharati knew and admired in Pondicherry.

Men die in vain distress.
Freedom should start from within.

The past will not come back
Fools, brooding ever on the past,
Don't fall into the pit
Of killing care
And die there.
No need to mark the past.
Resolved firmly in your minds
That today you are born anew
Eat, play and live in joy.
Instead no need to cry.

Again and again
Over what is gone
Foolish men
Again and again you see
A new breath entering
A new life sprouting.
How deluded of you to think
That the cycle of karma
Is the soul!
To lose yourself in deer-eyed Devi
And so to live
Is life.

Past deeds will not touch me
"The Son of God, am I not he?
This minute newly am I born
I am new, I am God, I am perfect"
Those that live thus on earth like gods

Are the *siddhas*
At one jump reaching the top of Dharma
They have no aims, no failure, no frustration.

Even if with infinite aims
They do a million things
Not enslaved to Fate here
Their skills derived
From Siva the unpredictable
With Uma on his bull
These souls move in the world
Like fire
Destroying the dense darkness of the past
Wise disciple
Engage in works without asking for results
And you will become immortal.

* * *

IN PRAISE OF GURUS

We worship great gurus
Lose fear on earth, lose bonds
Eternal grace of God is ours
Immortal on earth are we.
There are many kings in this world
Bent upon destroying it
Their pride will have a fall.
Our kings are the sages
Who yearn not, fear not, hinder not others
And have grace eternal.

FREEDOM FOR WOMEN

Freedom for women a new law
I proclaimed
Hear its value
If all life on earth is God
Fools, why not the wife?
High-flying stories you spin
Preach freedom, rain floods of compassion
If you deny women freedom
Life has no worth in this world.

THE GREATNESS OF THE MOTHER

To keep your wife a slave
Is it right to depress all women?
A usage to make the world laugh
Does it not make nonsense of love?
O you who are dead to all feeling
Don't you know that the person who bore
Suckled and brought you up
Is none other than Uma herself?
Didn't old granny our Avvai say
Treat your mother and father as gods?

What greater god than one's mother?
And isn't your mother a woman?
Your sisters elder and younger
Are all of them also not women?
To make one woman your slave
Is it right to enslave all motherhood

Like mother, like son they say
Is it then matter for wonder
That the sons of a slave are all slaves?
What we practise at home
Is what will obtain in the country.
If at home we must have a slave
Working for the freedom of the country
We needs must die in frustration.
Let us live like birds in the woods
Without worry and with love.
And with God's blessing
Love will now be the theme of my song.

IN PRAISE OF LOVE

Siva made Sakti his half
Brahma set his wife on his tongue
Vishnu bears on his breast
The bright-faced goddess of wealth
Is there even in heaven
A joy to rival women?
Your love-bound wife is Sakti
Through whom you should gain godhead.

THE ONENESS OF CREEDS
(A Talk with Govindaswami)

"I have given you now the essence
Doubt no more the truth of God
Hard hearts will not see God

Fill your heart for ever with grace
Faint hearts will not see God
Do ever the heroic deed
Jehova on high and Allah—
Clutch their feet who clutch theirs.

"Five continents on earth
And of religions a crore
Buddhism Jainism Zorastrianism
The Christian worship of Jesus
The Hindus' Sanatana Islam Jewry
The Tao of the Chinese
From 'blindman's buff' all the way up
How many creeds we know!
But deep in them all
Is one essence.

"Listen now to that essence
Which I shall expound
You are God, You are God, God yourself
You are That, you are That, yourself are That
To deny God's presence on earth
Is a delusion that has entered your mind
Put away that delusion
And assert for ever 'I am God'."

—P. S. S.

Enakku munne siddar palar

KUYIL PATTU
(Song of the Cuckoo)

"Kuyil Paattu" is a delightful fable in the Indian tradition, the characters being a 'kuyil' (Indian cuckoo), a monkey and a bull.

A variety of interpretations of the import of the poem have been offered, especially as the conclusion throws out a challenge. But, as Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar says, "while interpretalions of a teasingly significant poem like this are bound to vary ranging from the mystical and philosophical to the ethical and political, the poem itself perennially invites immediate and unceasing enjoyment."

The translalion is by P.S. Sundaram in his **Poems of Subramania Bharati.**

(58)

KUYIL

A little distance to the west
Of the famous town Puduvai
In Tamil Nadu in the South
May be seen a mango grove.
In the morning sun the blue sea—
Its billows hugging the opulent coast
Singing their regular Vedic chant—
Provides a combination of colours
Azure against red, like glittering gems.
From all four sides the huntsmen come
To that large grove to shoot birds.

In that grove one blessed morn
Free from the hunter's incursion,
A female koel caught my eye
Sitting pretty on a branch.

She thrilled the males of the koel clan,
Destroyed their peace, set their hearts on fire;
Ravished all the birds in that grove
And made them forget their morning chores;
Filled the air with nectar divine
And scattered lightning in thin streaks:
A koel in shape, a siren from heaven
With her enthralling music she was casting a spell.

Drunk already on poetry
I lost myself in this daydream

Which seemed to come quite out of this world!
Hearing this koel's pristine song
Ecstatic, rapt out of my senses,
"Why can't I" , I asked myself,
"My human form for a koel's change?
Then should I from this sweet bird
Never be separated at all!
And the two of us together should
Live and love and enjoy ourselves,
How sweet if in her fiery music
Both of us should be consumed!"

So I thought, mused much and yearned.
The very gods could never have heard
Such sweet music as I heard that day.
In the kuk-kuk of that koel's song
A lot of meaning seemed enclosed.
That would I fain reveal to the world.
But as for the wonderful voice, dear friends,
Where do you think that I should go?

THE KOEL'S SONG

Love, love, love
Love departing, love departing
Death, death, death!

Light, light, light
Light obscuring, light obscuring
Blight, blight, blight.

Cheer, cheer, cheer
Cheer if ended, cheer if ended
Drear, drear, drear.

Tone, tone, tone
Tone enfeebled, tone enfeebled
Moan, moan, moan.

Time, time, time
Time if ill-kept, time if ill-kept
Crime, crime, crime.

Style, style, style
Style abandoned, style abandoned
Vile, vile, vile.

Fame, fame, fame
Fame if sullied, fame if sullied
Shame, shame, shame.

Firm, firm, firm
Firmness cracking, firmness cracking
Worm, worm, worm.

Entwine, twine, twine
And later if the lad departs
Pine, pine, pine.

Flute, flute, flute
And if a rift should there appear
Mute, mute mute.

THE KOEL'S LOVE STORY

When that witching song was ended
All around was perfect calm
As in it joy with grief was blended.
I looked again, and save that koel
No bird else was there to see.
And she that one bird full of sorrow,
Head hung down, looked wan and withered.

Going near the tree she sat on,
"Darling bird, my treasure," I said,
"With your song so winsome sweet
That it can set seven worlds on fire,
What can ail you? Tell me true."

And when that magic bird, that koel
In human language answered me,
My heart burned. I heard her out.

"I pine and pine for love," she said,
"Or else for death I yearn and yearn."

"Your song enchants all birds of the sky,
Your wisdom is no less than theirs.
How can you then not find a lover?"

In a voice choked with grief and shame
The song-bird told her story thus:
"Setting aside both pride and grief
The whole truth I shall tell you, Sir.
All I ask is pity for a woman

And the forgiveness that goes with it.
Small though I am in body and mind
Born on this earth as a little bird
Through God's grace or maybe His ire
Every tongue I can understand
And am acquainted with all men's thoughts.

"To the chirp and twitter of forest birds,
The breeze's song among the trees,
The sound of river and waterfall,
The ceaseless music the blue waves make
In their eternal ebb and flow,
The songs that arise honey-sweet
When girls discover their growing love,
The songs of watermen, the sweet babble
The bangles of paddy-huskers make,
The feeling music of limestone pounders,
And the old, old ditties that ploughmen sing,
The chorus songs of girls in a circle
With their hands and bracelets keeping time,
The flutes and lutes which men play
And the vocal songs they all delight in—
On hill and dale, in town and forest,
To sounds like these I gave myself.
Alas poor me! that my heart should stifle
With words my tongue is afraid to speak!
With your long look you pierce my heart—
Man, can't you read what it contains?
I pine and pine for love," she said,
"Or else for death I yearn and yearn."

Hearing that little koel then

I was seized with a fever new and sweet
And was aware of nothing else
In my heart and in my soul
Than the sweet prattle of that bird.
"Give me love or give me death."
That burden sounded over all the keyboard,
Sat triumphant on every fret
Of that answering vina, my inmost heart.
Nothing else could I hear then.

As I stood transfixed, my mind awhirl
All the birds returned just then
To their branches in the grove and made a din.
The blue-black koel, long-suffering, said,
"That the course of true love never runs smooth,
My bright-eyed blessing, is well known.
You came like a boat to help me cross
The sea of sorrow in which I sink.
But even that joy I must now forgo
Which I found in sharing my thoughts with you.
Come again, kind Sir, I pray you,
The fourth day from now, if you please.
Don't forget, O nobly born!
You have captured my heart, and should you fail
I will not live. The fourth day, remember.
For me, poor sinner, these four days will be
Like ten eons. Farewell! My heart
Goes with you, Sir. Farewell," she said.
Great and unquenchable was her grief
When that little koel disappeared.

LOVE TRIUMPHANT

I knew not whether what I saw
Was a dream or real, I ceased to think.
Like one possessed by twenty devils,
My eyes and face like a drunken sot's,
A victim to all the arrows of Cupid
Which found their way deep into my heart,
A million koels I seemed to see
In that one form on every branch.
The world was simply filled with it.

Home I went unsteady, reeling.
And the things I endured in the course of that day,
The beatings, tossings to and fro,
What drum, what shuttle could have survived?
The day passed and there I was.
My life, Cupid with his long bow,
That juggling bird with its siren song
Stood all stock-still as though bewitched!

Early in the morning, at crack of dawn
(I tell no lies) like a puppet moved
By cunning Cupid, unconscious myself,
My two legs striding as if on their own,
I reached the grove to see that bird.
What I saw on the long road thither
I can't recall. When I reached the copse
The green trees were all in the red sun a-glitter.
And the birds, as if they knew my wish,
Had left the place. By the fierce love moved
Which that wonder-bird had wrought in me

Exceeding eager I circled each place
And scanned every branch in search of her.

KOEL AND MONKEY

She wasn't on the tree where last she was.
Looking around all a-quiver—
O treachery! O Woman! O false god Cupid!
My heart! my past! this wretched world!
How shall I tell the sight I saw?
Listen, all men driven crazy by women!
Listen, too, you poets who glorify love,
Listen mankind, and cruel Fate listen!
The juggler koel was seated on a branch
With her flashing eyes and tiny body
Her mouth full of coaxing words
Pleading tearfully, O my God!
With a male monkey and saying to him
All manner of things, Heaven only knows what!

What is good? What is ill? What should one do?

Then and there I decided
To cut down those two with my sword.
But before I did execution
I also wished to hear a little
What that koel had to tell that monkey.
Carefully trying to avoid their eyes
I took shelter under that tree
And in hiding heard these words
Uttered by that female bird :

"O Monkey, Your Highness, unequalled in beauty,
Can a woman of whatever birth resist
Your sublime looks, withstand your charm?
Of all that live on earth men think
They are chief and lord. Perhaps we may
Concede their claim in running a village,
A temple, a clan, a government.
But in beauty of body and loud discourse,
In sitting in state with back bent double,
Can men ever hope to equal a monkey?
However they may strain themselves,
Confront you with their bodies clad
Not naturally with silk-soft fell
But their own fanciful creations,
With beard and moustache carefully grown
To ape in vain your ape's beauty,
Drinking and dancing in the hope that they might
Reach your heights in curvets and jumps,
Climbing with ladders the towers you can take
With such ease in your stride, and doing much else,
Can they in speed come near a monkey?
Where will they go, oh where, for a tail?
Can their miserable tuck-ins rival it?
They do indeed have tails of a sort
Which from their turbans hang like rags
(And things they proudly call their tails
Which no formal occasion can be formal without),
But when it comes to taking a leap
Can those human inventions give them the swing
That a God-given tail alone can give?

With your meatless diet and benign looks
What caste on earth is pious like you?
A gem among monkeys I have found.
Though born, alas, a wretched bird
My past penances I must thank
For falling thus under your spell.
I sing, great Sir, out of my love.
Be pleased, I pray you, to hear me."
(What that koel spoke in monkey-tongue
I managed somehow to understand).

The wretched bird with a felling that burnt
Sung her song ambrosially sweet:
Love, love, love
Love departing, love departing
Death, death, death.
Beasts in forests and babes in arms
And serpents, they say, respond to music.
This dry monkey, as if now drunk,
His senses lost with too much toddy,
Ran and jumped, clapped his hands,
Alternate shut and opened his eyes,
And scattered with his hands and feet
All the dust he could get together,
"Ha, ha! My soul! how it melts!
O darling koel, my precious, divine,
The love I bear cannot be told.
'Love departing instant death'
You sang, but with love have killed me!
All parting hence for me is over,
Right now I will savour a kiss from you."

These words of his made me so sore
I was bent on killing him at once
And threw my sword at him, when lo!
Was it a dream or was I awake?
Or was it a divine dispensation?
The little monkey scowling escaped
And that curious koel disappeared.
The grove was full of the noise of birds
And I a fool completely lost
Groped in vain all over the place—
But that little imp of a koel had gone!

DARKNESS AND LIGHT

Up in the sky the sun held court
In might and majesty in a bright halo.
My limbs all tired, my sight unsteady,
My heart beating, no way of retreat,
By shame and grief quite overcome,
I got back home and fell in a faint.
By the evening however I was myself again.

All around me were my friends.
"Why this swoon?", "Where did you go?"
"What on earth were you up to?"
"Before day broke, early and alone,
You went out, we heard: what for and why?"
"What made you fast throughout the day?"
With a volley of questions they crowded and
crushed me.
I just did not know what to tell whom.

"I can't reply now in any detail.
Come tomorrow, I will tell you all.
Today you must just leave me alone."

The friends left, and my poor mother
Gave me good milk and something to eat.
A little refreshed I lay alone,
Forgot all and fell asleep.

Even now when I tell of the past
How the old grief crowds into my heart!
Words come rushing, trip and fall,
Matter gathers in a heap in the mind.
The salesman's art I do not have
To stop a tragedy in the middle
And exercise the mind in spinning
Long yarns of mere description.
And at the thought of the story itself
The mind boggles and shies away.
Let me rather now compose
A paean in praise of the beauty of dawn.

To melt gold, and cool it, and turn it
Into honey—is that just a gimmick?
When light spreads slowly over the sky
And soon sets all of it aflame
Where is the simile to describe that miracle?
The eye is wonderful, they say.
But isn't the eye of that eye more wonderful
Which makes us measure the very heavens?
If those great ones who meditate
On the Primordial Alone

Describe it as a spreading Light,
To what other thing on this earth
Can Light itself be compared?
That which makes the grass giggle,
The flower a surprise, mud clear,
Water smile, the sky a plain—
That miracle-worker Light
I awoke in the morning and worshipped.
I saw again the world involved,
Enjoying itself as on all four sides
Life and the sounds of living arose.
And now, dear friends, listen to me
As the tragic tale I continue.

KOEL AND BULL

Awakened from sleep, my legs as before
Dragging me groveward, hardly aware,
I went to the copse and looked around.
The flock of birds was not to be seen.
I only saw in a far corner
On the top branch of the mango tree
The blue-black koel, and heard her spin
A long yarn to one below—
An old bull that deeply absorbed
Was eagerly lapping it all up.

I saw, flared up and was perturbed.
My heart aflame I choked and growled.
My body was bathed in perspiration.
I decided to make a dash with my sword

But then bethinking it would be best
To listen first to all its tales
And then kill that lying bird
Hid myself as before
While the koel told its stale romance
In glittering words with a golden voice:

"O Bull the magnet that draws all
Feminine hearts, Eros himself
Epiphanic in bovine form,
Is there on earth beauty like yours?
Men themselves, commending strength,
Compare their children to a bull.
O noble one, of bulls most weighty,
Your long face and outstanding horns,
Your body huge like a cotton bale,
Your shoulders Atlantean, tail heroic,
Your "moo" a roar like thunder out of heaven,
Your dexterity in twisting your tail
And lashing with it any silly bird
That presumes to sit on your broad back—
All these for long I have noted and loved.
Born myself in the clan of birds
That know nothing of lordly shape,
Strength of muscle or stride majestic,
Day and night for a little food
I roam the forests, pick up crumbs,
Myself a food for foolish men
To whom my value is my meat.
What did I gain born like this
In the little clan of the koel?
Is there on earth a sinner like me?

But have you not heard how out of mud
Springs the lotus, and out of a fish
Comes the bright and precious pearl?
Can base birth keep down and check
The love that arises in one's heart?
Is Cupid, too, class-conscious, a snob?
Useless a long-drawn argument then!
It may be that in my foolishness,
Or who knows for my past penance,
Among all males, I, poor me,
Have been able to fix on you.
After you have God-like helped
Those devils called men to fill their maws,
And helpless on their own two feet
With your help to transport themselves,
When you enjoy your rest well earned,
Poor me, I will come and sing to you;
Take a little space on your back;
Feel happy with a stroke from your tail;
Sing a sharp note that will harmonise
With your deep bass; kill without ruth
The ticks that will plague and pester you.
When after grazing in forest and field
On a full stomach you chew the cud
I will be by your side, regale you with tales.
O great Bull, hero of the forest,
I fall at your feet. Save this female.
I pine with love. I know full well
That it is not for a woman to take the lead.
But in a case like this so out of the way
What way out for love suppressed?
Shyness and nicety are among equals—

What shame can the poor have before the rich?
Do we not trumpet our love of God?
Do subjects keep back their wants from their king?
When did love take note of shame?"

These and many more loving words
That treacherous koel at great length spoke
And as of old sang her guileful song,
That filled all earth with its sweetness:
Love, love, love
Love departing, love departing
Death, death, death!

Till the song ended nor earth nor heaven,
I knew: nor was I aware
Of the forest and its trees,
Knew not myself nor yet the bull.
The only thing I knew and felt
Was the bubbling sweetness of that golden voice.

O Creator, four-faced Brahma,
You made this world of old, they say,
Gathered the waters, heaped up the earth
Produced fire, cold and heat,
Blew the air and spread the sky.
Who can measure your handiwork's might?
Great big spherical worlds in crores
Which the mind of man cannot conceive
You have set up in outer space
And keep them eternally moving.
And in secret, O mischievous Brahma,
How much power you have hidden!

Time too you have made and boundless space.
Millions are the beings that
Day after day appear and fade
In worlds that are innumerable.
Lives self-conscious you have created.
Great indeed are all these works.
Who on earth can tell your skill?

Yet among all your wonderful works
The greatest surely is the wonder of music.
If forest and sea and sky are wonders
Unrivalled on earth is the miracle of music.
If the elements working together is a wonder
What of the notes that harmonise?
More than the million sights that charm
Is the witching charm of sweet sound.

When the magic of that divine song
Sung by that trashy thrush was over,
Back on earth again, I flashed
The sword in my hand at that bull.
Before it could hit him the bull had fled.
The koel had gone, and all those birds
Came back to their branches as before.
And I unashamed of my love for that bird
Sought her in vain and came back home.

I thought and thought but nothing was clear—
How the forest koel brought tears to my eyes
With its tale of love that melted my heart;
How foolishly I fell in love;
How the story I was going to write

Was held up by this absurd bird;
How a heart that never cared for a thing
Was amazed and consumed by the fire of love;
How a wretched monkey and a hack bull
Turned up as rivals and cruel foes;
And in all this tomfoolery I
Unabashed like a madcap pursued my love—
I thought and thought but nothing was clear.
My eyelids closed and I plunged into sleep.

THE FOURTH DAY

The fourth day, my day of tryst
With that treacherous koel which befooled me,
Tempted me with its great love
Only to charm and betray me.
Upstairs at home when I was thinking
Of the humiliations to which that cheat
Had subjected me, all astonished
And not knowing what to do,
My eyes sought the way to the woods.
I saw a black bird in the sky
And wondered, "Is this then our cheat?"
As it hovered at a distance
I could not clearly make it out,
Nor was content to part from it.
With growing wonder I came down
And found myself out in the street.

In the west was this form seen
A black spot in a sea of light.

When I made towards it a little fast
To know if it was that shameless bird
The thing that stood still began to fly.
Stood I, it stood; moved I, it moved;
Would not let me approach and know it.
Thus from the sky it showed the way
And I on earth went following it.

In the end that bird neared
The mango grove I mentioned before
And unhindered got in there.
And fool that I am I too went in
And found that little black koel
Seated on a branch in a flood of light
And golden-voiced in a new tone sing
Its lying stale old tale of love.
I saw it and choking with rage went near.

"You wretched koel, Falsehood's self,
Who know not what constancy is,
I suppose," I said, "you dragged me here
To listen to your despicable song
Inspired by your darling monkey
And your sweet-heart, the bull."

In my rage I thought I would kill it
But again my heart relented.
The lying koel meanwhile
Had turned her heart into iron
Though like a stream deceitful tears
Gushed from her eyes. In a voice
Musical and sweet as ever

This is what she had to say:

“My darling Sir, is it your pleasure
To keep poor me alive on earth
Or kill me straight? Reply in a word.
The *krouncha* bird widowed won’t live.
An angry sun will kill a flower.
Where can a child find refuge
If its own mother is after its blood?
When gods get wrathful what happens to men?
My love, my king, my noble Sir,
If even in thought you are angry with me
That moment I will kill myself,
Fall into a blazing fire,
Be eaten up by a ravening beast.
I know the crime you accuse me of—
I won’t blame you, nor should you me.
With a low monkey and a hack bull
I flirted like a coquette according to you;
What shall I say? What do? How live?
Sir, it isn’t for me to contradict you,
And yet I am guiltless, believe it or not.
O cruel Fate, yours be the burden
Whether I am joined with my king here
And thus improve my condition,
Or not believing a word of mine
He despises and rejects me
And I on the instant fall into a fire.
I am prepared for either lot.
What dare I not do, cruel Fate?

THE KOEL'S PAST

"My rare treasure, my God, my life,
Be pleased to hear one thing ere you go.
Near the long-ranged Podiya once
In a grove on the branch of a mango tree,
Rapt in thought I was sitting alone.
To that place then came a sage.
I took him for a great soul
And fell at his feet; and he the exalted
Saw and blessed me. And thereupon
'Vedic sage,' I said, 'my birth
Was among the lowly birds.
How is it that unlike others
And contrary to my inborn limits
I understand all languages?
Why like men's is my mental state?
Explain this, Sir,' I humbly said.

And this is what that sage replied:
'Listen, koel, in your former birth
You were the child of a hunter chief,
Muruhan the brave, who led brave men
On a mountain in the south in Chera land.
In your youthful beauty you stood unrivalled
By any in all three Tamil lands.
Among the fine upstanding huntsmen
A cousin of yours Maadan by name,
A victim to the arrows of Cupid,
Struck and melted by your beauty,
Long resolved to marry you,
Wooed you with flowers, fresh honey, and gold.

Daily he wooed you, his heart yearning,
All his thoughts fixed solely on you.
Not out of love but out of pity,
Honey-tongued one, you gave him your word.
You just could not see him pine.

Meanwhile your beauty's great fame spread
All over the country. A hunter chief,
Rich and brave, near the Honey Mountains,
A terror to all the neighbourhood,
Known as the bald-headed Tiger
Sought for his eldest son Oran
A fitting wife and decided
That you should be the bride he sought.
"I am minded to marry your daughter to my son,"
He told your father to his infinite joy.
In twice six days in proper style
He wanted the wedding to take place.

When Maadan heard that in twelve days' time
A stranger from the Honey Mountains
Would come and snatch you away from him,
His mind a furnace of fire and smoke,
He came to you the very next day
To rate and tax you with stinging words.
And you in your deep compassion
Said, "Abate, Maadan, your anger awhile.
Though compelled to marry Oran
And under his aegis forced to live
In three months I shall work out a plan
Of separation and back return.
The sacred string that binds a woman

To her husband all her life
I shall take off and leave behind,
And in eight months yourself I will wed.
Shall I go back on my word to you?
Believe me, Maadan, trust me," you said
Not out of love but out of pity.
(In your former birth as the hunter's daughter
They called you, my dear, the little Kuyili).

Then a few days later, one evening,
When you and your companion girls
Were playing in the forest like lightning-streaks
King Cheraman's dear son came a-hunting.
Alone he came pursuing a deer.
He saw you and your friends at play.
Infatuated beyond all bounds
He decided to make you his,
And you too fell madly in love.
He gazed at you and you stood gazing.
In that one gaze your souls commingled.
Your friends seeing his gorgeous gear
Guessed he must be the emperor's son
And frightened left. "The Prince of Vanji
I am," he said, "O blessed daughter
Of the hunter chief, divinely fair,
Today I realise my luck as a man.
I am in love with you at first sight."

Keeping down your whelming love,
"Sir," you said, "in your stately home
There must be five hundred women.
Peerless in beauty, learned, tuneful

That with their voices can melt a stone.
Wed one of them and be happy ever.
I a tribal need no king.
Can a fierce lion yearn for a hare?
Do conquering kings go to huntsmen for brides?
Content to live as chaste women
Even to a Prince we are not for sale.
Your golden feet I touch. Farewell.
How bad of my friends to have left me and gone!"

When you spoke thus and stood helpless,
confused,
That Prince reading your love in your eyes
Got nearer and quick as lightning
Kissed your cheek which went all red.
Annoyed you moved away, but where
Are the rules to bind those in love?
With a leap he clasped you to his bosom.
"Save you what woman have I on earth?
My gold, my gem, nectar, delight!
You are my wife, and *you* are my queen,
My help and refuge, my family god.
What girl shall I think of other than you?
Why without reason should you doubt me?
We shall march straight to your home now,
My tale I will tell and with Vedic rites
Marry you, my maiden queen!"

He struck your right hand and swore.
You swelled with joy, were ecstatic,
In the surging wave of happiness
Forgot all shame, all consciousness.

In that unsating dream of delight
Tight embraced his broad shoulders
To drink the honey of his lips.
And he the Prince like a bee in honey,
Like iron drawn by the magic of a magnet,
Fondly clasped you, and your red lips
Kissed and sucked up with his own.

Arrived just then from his town
And hearing that you had gone to the woods
With your friends to make merry,
Eager to meet you there at once,
Oran turned up. He came, he saw.

"What!" he said, "in broad daylight!
Look at this brazen wench's doing!
Before even the marriage is through
My name is mud, my shame complete!
The troth was plighted truly but look
At the breach this insolent wretch has wrought!"
So tall Oran stood fuming, perplexed.

Somebody meanwhile had told Maadan
Of bridegroom Oran's arrival
And his departure to the grove
In search of his bride and her friends.
In a trice with a leap and a bound
His body sweating, his eyes a-fire,
Came Maadan there. But for him
The hunter chief's son from the Honey Mountain
Had no eyes. Nor had Maadan any time
For tall Oran towering like a tree.

Only one thing the two of them saw:
Kuyili the maid wrapped up in a stranger.
That alone Maadan saw, that alone Oran.
Maddened was Maadan, maddened was Oran.

But the Prince and the maid were in Paradise
Completely rapt, their eyelids closed.
In the heavenly joy of their soul's mingling
Deep in communion were four eyes shut;
And seeing them, their souls aflame
Darting sparks, were four eyes open.

Maadan, sword drawn, rushed at the Prince.
Oran likewise rushed with his sword.
Two stabs pierced the Prince's back,
And he turning in two sweeps
Felled them both who went down dumb.
The Prince, too, tired fell on the earth.

As you gathered him, your eyes a flood,
Mouth lamenting, heart broken,
"Dear girl," said the Prince, "I am finished.
In a few moments I shall die.
No need to weep, death is nothing.
Again, dear heart, we shall turn up on earth.
Again, my precious, I will love you
And with you joined live in joy.
There shall be birth again and cheer,
A life together in the future."
He said and closed his eyes and smiled.
His face was beaming as he passed away.

By a trick of Maadan's performed here
You, poor thing, have a bird's form.
Your Prince is a man now growing up
In a town on the seacoast in Tondai.
He will see you in a wood, hear you sing
A tender song. Because of the past
He will again be caught in love
With you, dear koel,' said the sage.

'Sir,' I replied, 'I am now a koel
While he the Prince is a lofty human.
Even if love should be between us
How can marriage ever be?
Won't the Prince's deathbed utterance
Prove a falsehood?' He smiled and said,
'Poor fool, you were born in this life too
A human child to a huntsman
In the Vindhyas. But because
Of the past that none may escape,
Maadan and Oran who as evil spirits
Were roaming the forests and the hills
Saw you there, and lest you should
In this birth too join the Prince
Transformed themselves and so contrived
That you should get a koel's form
And wheresoever you go now
Those two haunt you as Monkey and Bull.
Have you not understood this?'

'Oh my Fate!' I then exclaimed,
'Is it right that the dead
Should so torture those alive?

If these devils befool me
Make me forget my birth
And torment me all the time,
If they, when I meet my lover,
In their great rage contrive harm
What shall I do? My lord, is there
No remedy for this?' I asked.

Consoling me the great sage said,
'O koel when in Tondai land
That Prince sees you in a grove
And lost in the sweetness of your song
Stands transfixed in great love
Those two devils with their cunning
Will work various illusions
To confuse and make him doubt you.
He will take you then for a betrayer
And perplexed and angry wish to leave.
What happens then you will find then.
It is time for my evening rites,' he said,
And with that vanished into thin air.

"O my beloved, I have said
All that the sage said without a change.
How you will take it I don't know, alas!
Noble one, vouchsafe me love,
Or failing that, vouchsafe me death
At your own hands," she said and then
Into my hands that koel fell.

But who will have the heart to kill?
Even the devil, the saying goes,

Is melted by a woman's woes.
And if devils ruthless at times
Indulge in jugglery and deceit
Will any human act on that?
Can there be love where doubt exists?
When a woman reveals her passion
Where is the man that will not yield?
Fondly I caught that dear bird
Set it in front and gazed at it.
The madness of love surging in me
I gave it a kiss—and the koel was gone!

A miracle, a miracle that can't be described!
Nectar emerging from the ocean of love,
The land of faery, the Divine as Woman!
There she stood, intense in love
Looked at me with eyes unwinking,
And then a little bowed her head.

O Lord, how can I in words
Describe her beauty, or her two eyes
That looked as if they would eat me up?
Can speech convey the poetry
That lies afloat in loving eyes?
Can I forget the divine flash
Lighting her teeth white as pearls
Or the ripe richness of her lips?
A streak of lightning alighted on earth,
Who can describe her exquisite form
Her chiselled features, her firm figure
Sweeter than honey ever was?

One word to the learned let me say:
Mixing with the fruit-juice of poesy
The essence of music and of dance
And adding to it a little nectar
The Creator must have put all to dry
In love's sunshine, that with the candy
Thus obtained he could fashion her body.

Seeing her there in rapture I
Clasped her and sucked the wine of her lips,
Kissing and kissing and kissing again
And lost my senses in ecstasy.

When after a little while, lo and behold!
The girl and the grove and everything else
Vanished completely, and with a shriek
I fell down. When I opened my eyes
All I saw was the old roll of paper,
Pen, news-sheets and tattered mat,
All recalling the house where I lived.

The grove, the koel, love and romance
Were but the result it would appear
Of the enchanting beauty of the evening,
A false creation of the brain.
And yet, dear savants, deeply read,
A figment of fancy though it may be
If you can see in it a bit of philosophy
A flight esoteric, an allegory,
I shall be thankful if you let me know.

—P.S.S.

Kaalai ilam parithi

PANCHALI SAPATHAM
(Panchali's Vow)

Panchali Sapatham *isolates and dramatizes a poignant scene in the epic Mahabharata.*

The narrative written in 1912 is pregnant with suggestions of the socio-political problems of the period. The enslaved motherland, heroic in her loneliness, is symbolized by Panchali[1]*, hemmed in by imperial courtiers and insulted by cruel Dussasana, while her five brave husbands stand helpless owing to a conspiracy of circumstances. Panchali also personifies India's womanhood, surrounded by obscurantism and exploited by the overbearing male, whether lover, lord or law-giver.*

Over and above these political and social suggestions, the noble queen thundering at last in fury is Sakti, the Creatrix Herself, proclaiming the impending victory of Truth and Light over injustice and darkness.

It is impossible to recapture in translation the Tamil original's varied rhythmic movements and nuances of meaning. Hence, only a few passages have been chosen for rendering into English.

The work begins with invocation to Brahma and Goddess Saraswati.

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[1]The princess of Panchala, Draupadi

(59)

PANCHALI SAPATHAM

INVOCATIONS

(1)

To Brahma

AUM, the sound the great ones chant
To counteract the power of Fate;
The sound that ends all evil, drives
All sorrow out and brings in weal;
Nameless and formless and beyond
The reach of mind or intellect;
The "Yea" behind all that exists;
The Being which is Awareness-Bliss,
Brahman, the One eternal That,
On that pure Being, I meditate.
May I gain the gifts of *tapas*,
Yoga, Siva-*jnana* and *bhakti*!
May victorious Siva-Sakti
Abide with me and darkness perish!
And may this work in Tamil sweet
Win fame and flourish ever fresh!

(2)

To Saraswati

Enthroned on the white lotus, crowned
With glory, she holds the lute from which
Out gushes a flood of melody.
She blessed me even as a child
And by her grace enabled me
To drink and serve the heady wine,
The ambrosia churned out from the sea
Of Tamil poesy. In this goddess,
Vani[1], I take refuge, trusting
To her grace for the gift of speech.
May she bless me and may I
Recount in Tamil song majestic
The tale of that rare child of Penance
Whose name shall stand on earth as long
As earth exists; the Flower beloved
Of the Five Brothers, she whose heart
Was strong as adamant, Draupadi.

(3)

To Vani (Saraswati)

Clear understanding, clear expression,
Raising before the mind's eye many
Visions of mounting joy that melt

[1]Pronounced as "Vaani", goddess of learning, with the stringed instrument *veena* in her hand; Saraswati.

The heart and fill the eyes with tears,—
These functions from your grace proceed!
Bright Vani, by your grace, vouchsafe
To me, your servant, all these gifts!

(4)

To Para-Sakti

The sculptor takes a stone and lays it
As a door-step there supine;
Another stone aloft he raises
As a statue proud, divine.
You, the Mother of the World,
Choose whom you will, and mould and use
How you will, the chosen child.
Here, I to you surrendered, pray:
Make me a maker too, a Master
Of enduring Art.

(5)

To Saraswati

Ceaseless whirl the particles,
        So the men of science affirm;
Ceaseless do the orbs revolve,
        So the astronomers aver.
If all things in the universe
        Are thus in ceaseless action busy,

May not my mind, O Goddess, play
Ceaseless in your grace's space?

—K.S.

We are first introduced to the opulence of Hastinapura, and King Duryodhana's durbar. This self-centered lord is filled with envy, as his five cousins, the Pandava princes (namely, Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva), reign in neighbouring Indraprastha.

Duryodhana has everything, yet feels a pauper, because the Pandavas live and thrive, and are loved and respected by one and all.

The sons of Pandu
The princes five
Shine like jewels
And rule like gods......
Upon the eyes of Arjuna
Upon the chest of Bhima strong,
Engraved is my inferior state.

Draupadi, the Pandavas' common queen-consort, is also a source of Duryodhana's envious rancour. Had she not once laughed at his discomfiture in the Pandava court?

The Pandavas should be humiliated by some means, fair or foul. Nothing else would satisfy Duryodhana's vanity.

He seeks the counsel of his evil-minded maternal uncle, Sakuni, who proposes that since Pandavas' prowess could not be vanquished in war, a foul, deceitful game of dice should be tried.

Accepting, with reservations, the treacherous invitation for a feast and the fun of a royal game of dice, the five princes along with their queen-consort Draupadi leave for Indraprastha with all paraphernalia. On their way the royal party camps in a woodland.

Here, Arjuna the prince-charming among the Pandavas, takes Draupadi aside to a meadow, where they both behold the glorious sunset.

SUNSET

Arjuna :

The sun rolls down
Immeasurably swift

Towards the nadir of the sky.
Look! dark-haired one,
Kali, the Mother,
Has melted down a million lightning streaks
And cast this flaming disc;
She whirls it now.
A bright green wheel's in front of the supernal
glory.
What wondrous green, a green not of this earth!
And from the circling flame, jagged diamond tongues
Shoot forth intermittent.
Oh, but this is a poem that the Mother is weaving.
Rise up, my love, pray,
'May this last for ever and ever.'
Clouds crowd on the glowing sun encircling him.
They burn.
Colours break out; will no one tell me their secret?
They burn.
What shapes, what subtle tones!
Liquid fire. Streams of molten gold.
Burning gold isles!

Look, in their midst blue lagoons.
What multitudinous shades of blue,
Innumerable reds, legions of blacks and greens,
And here a black monster towering mighty and
huge.
In the heart of the pools of blue.
Gold boats dancing.
Black peaks laced with golden light;
And there in the sea of darkness, wave on wave,
Gold whales prancing;

A riot of light, turn where I may.
A riot, an ineffable glory of colour.

—A.S.R.

In his elaborate note to the first part of Panchali Sapatham *brought out in book form in the year* 1912 *in Pondicherry, Subramania Bharati reproduced this essay on "Sunset" published earlier in the journal* Karmayogi. *Here is its English rendering:*

Wherever you look, there is so much beauty in the world, only we Tamils do not notice it. You can trust our folk to rush in throngs to the bank of a pond every Saturday evening for garuda-watching[1]; but not a soul goes to see the wonders that appear in the sky at the sunset. That is the time when, up in the sky, Indra displays his enchanting magic shows. What is seen this moment is not there the next. Spend all the wealth in the world and put up a show of paintings; yet that will not be a millionth part as grand as the splendours of the sunset sky that cost nothing to see. A rich man expends a fortune for a display of fireworks; and a thousand poor men see that, sigh and say, "He is rich and can afford it!" Brother, go and see the wonders of the sunset!

That it is bad for the eyes to look at the sun is the blind belief of the eyeless—just ignore it. That it is a sin to look at the sun may be what the fools say the Shastra says—shut your eyes and don't look at their Shastra.

Our seers of the Vedic age have gone into raptures at the sight of Nature's beauty and have expressed their ecstasy in glorious hymns. Great poets like Kalidasa have lost themselves in Nature's beauty and, in wonderful verses,

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[1]Garuda, the white-necked bird of the kite family, is the vehicle of Vishnu and it is considered a good omen to sight it on a Saturday evening.

uttered its praise. Only now-a-days, in this age and in this unfortunate land, the blind who have never looked up at the sky, go about claiming to be poets.

It is not possible to write about the amazing charms of the sunset and make others appreciate them. You may take some one to see it for himself; yet, at first, it may mean nothing more than getting dazzled in the eyes and starting blinking. Brother, you have to go all by yourself and keep watching it for days on end; then, only then, will you learn to drink in little by little the divine spectacle. In the sense-beguiling, spell-binding, heavenly magic show of sunrise or sunset, not only do newer wonders appear with each changing moment, but there is something more special; today it is not like yesterday, and tomorrow will not be like today.

Different days bring different wonders, different worlds, different grandeurs, different fantasies, different delights, endless indescribables.

I shall try somehow to put down here the wonders I beheld the other evening: There in the horizon the golden orb of the sun revolved in a swift fiery swirl. It looked as though a hundred streaks of lightnings had been smelted together into a rolling disc. Yes, the eyes do get a little dazzled, but only in the beginning. Look at it steadily for some time and the dazzle disappears. You see two round discs revolving, one above the other. The one below is dazzling bright; the other above, in front, is emerald green, unearthly green!

The green disc hides the brilliant disc. However, off and on, the diamond needles from behind pierce our eyes.

Look! Look at these clouds around the sun—all, all aflame! Ah! What colours! And what shapes! How many combinations! Lava of pure fire! Streams of molten gold! Flaming islands of gold!

Lakes of blue! Dark looming giant forms! How many kind of blue! Of red! Of green! And how many shades of black! Golden boats afloat upon an azure lake! Black

peaks with fiery golden borders! Dark sea with golden whales! Heaped up light on every side! Riot of colours! Let go. I cannot describe it.

—N.B.

Now, we come to the verses that lament the fall of Yudhishthira into the trap, who agrees to the dice game with Sakuni playing on behalf of Duryodhana.

ACQUIESCENCE

Yudhishthira, who felt ever bound
By dharma, reflected now on cruel
Fate and so mistook some spurious
Custom, a senseless compact
For an inviolable bond!
Alas, since that remote event
How many, many well-meaning people
Have in this manner come to grief!
Tradition and precedent indeed!
Should False turn True simply because
It sometimes happened thus before?
And what exactly is this "before"?
Is it yesterday or is it, O fools,
Thirty million years ago?
The countless people who swarmed on earth
In ancient times, were they all sages?
Do you think there were no fools on earth
Before you were born? Since earth began
All till this day, amid the millions
And millions of people numerous

Like raindrops from a monsoon cloud,
Folly and baseness surely existed—
Yes, these existed before you were born!
Alas, in this our Bharat land
Millions have become weak and timid
Deeming some wicked custom 'dharma',
And some false, foolish phrases 'Shastra'!
Yudhishthira, learned, righteous,
He too fell a victim to this Fate!

In the dice game, Yudhishthira stakes, one after another, his kingdom, his four brothers and then himself and loses them all to Duryodhana.

KINGDOM STAKED

As if a temple priest should sell
The image there installed for worship;
As if the sentinel should pledge
And lose the house he's there to guard;
Yudhishthira who knew a thousand
Rules of conduct, acted like
The meanest mortal, fie O fie!
He staked and lost the land he ruled!
Kings now regard the people, not
As human beings like themselves,
But as herds of sheep. True, treatises
On Rules of Government abound;
Yet what prevails in practice fails
In justice to the land and people.
Nowhere in the world today

Is found the kind of rule which is
Impartial, honest, not undermining
Dharma and not plunging people
Into grief. But why waste words?
Let us get on with telling the tale!

Egged on by evil-incarnate Sakuni, the righteous Yudhishthira even agrees to stake his queen-wife Panchali in an all out bid—and the Poet asks:

STAKING PANCHALI

Would one place a votive offering
Before a mongrel cur for chewing?
Would one erect a mansion of gold
And invite a ghost to dwell in it?
Would one, with human blood, buy gold
And make an ornament for an owl?
Yes, this he did, with none to stop him!
He made a goddess the slave of slaves!
Would one kill a darling child
Because one needs some leather for shoes?
Was Panchali, the child of penance,
A wage fit for a vulgar gamble?

—And he loses her "as the false dice rolled as Sakuni willed".

The Kuru clan are elated. Duryodhana, their king, proudly orders that Draupadi, now his slave, be brought to the royal court.

His brother Dussasana instantly reaches the royal apartment and, deaf to her varied pleadings, drags her all the way to the assembly hall of the Kurus.

PANCHALI DRAGGED

Cackling and clearing his throat
The big boor swooped on her and caught
With his hand her hair and dragged her! She,
The Pandava princess, half alive
Cried out 'Alas' and almost swooned.
The wretch held fast her long, black hair
And dragged her forwards. All the way
Swarms of people stood by and sighed
"What cruelty!"—What baseness! Baseness
Beyond words! Unheroic curs!
Should they not pounce upon and trample
Down to earth the beastly 'prince'?
Yes, rescue and restore the lady
To her royal apartment? Instead
They stood like tall trees, wailing, sighing!
Can effeminate wailing bring
Succour to others at their need?

Draupadi protests, weeps and appeals to the learned among the elders in the hall to speak out, as they should know the laws of nature and humanity. The grand old Bhishmacharya talks thus vaguely of the law in vogue:

BHISHMA TO DRAUPADI

Bhishma, worthy sire, spoke up—"O woman,
Yudhishthira himself staked you and lost.
You argue and repudiate his act.
Sakuni, a master in this game with skill,
Your lord and master overcame.

But then this very staking of you, this
You call a crime. What you say, princess,
May be right according to the Vedic sages
Of ancient times—that's all long ago!
In those days, men and women, were deemed equal.
In later times all this has changed: the books
In use today lay down that women are
Inferior to man: A man can sell his wife: he can
E'en gift her to another. The same law
Applies here as to any animal!
Yudhishthira, a slave himself, can sell you too
Into slavery, such is the law!
To see the ways of these misguided people
E'en rocks will shudder, beasts will close their eyes
In shame! Clear is the injustice done to you.
And yet since you demand the Shastraic law
And prevailing custom, I must say that these
Speak not in your favour. I am helpless.
And cannot stop this wrong"—so said the sire
And hung his head—
And then the lady spoke:

DRAUPADI SPEAKS OUT

"Well have you, Sir, expounded Moral Law!
When Ravana of old, by means most foul, took Sita
Kept her in a grove, sent for his ministers
And priests and told them how he seized and brought
The lady, the priests said (it is said) 'Well done!
Your Majesty's deed is in accord with dharma.'
Where demons rule, Shastras feast on corpses!"

Panchali prays, cries out with folded hands, and trembles "like a wounded deer." . . . "Down rolled her tears and hair."

But the beast Dussasana jeers, calls her names, drags her and pulls her dishevelled hair and pushes her forward.

Bhima, the second Pandava prince known for his might as well as short temper, rages like a lion in chains, looks at his elder Yudhishthira and bursts out:

BHIMA'S WRATH

Brother, in gambling dens, they do
Have women-servants. But even there
No servant-maid is made a stake!
What made you do this? Brother, whom
Did you wager? Think of it!
The shining lamp of womanhood,
The beauteous form of love incarnate,
Glowing child of the great Panchala
Praised as glorious by kings on earth,
A terror to all in terrible war,
It is her you have staked and lost, brother!
Dire is your error! You have killed
Dharma! Not by stealth, no, not
As a wager did we win her.
In battle fierce we won her; through
Heroic victory we won her.
Ours was a noble name imperial—
This in a moment you have ruined!
Our kingdom whole, you lost, brother,
And patiently we bore it;
Then us you lost and made us slaves,
And even this we bore in silence;

But then you wagered Draupada's daughter,
Dhrishtadyumna's sister, a stake
For a call of two in a fall of dice!
She, a slave to these men, O brother!
This we can never brook. Sahadeva,
Go fetch a lighted torch. We will burn
The hand, the elder brother's hand,
That wagered and lost this radiant flame!

—N.B.

Arjuna's remonstrations restrain Bhima.

Soon, Karna, the bosom friend of Duryodhana, comes out with the heinous order:

THE DISROBING

Slaves have no right whatsoever
    To wear their breast-cloth.
Nor is this woman noble
    Who consorts with the five.
Hey, servant! Come!
    Remove the upper garments
From the Pandavas—
And also the woman's clothing.

When all worldly supports fail, Draupadi, in utter helplessness as she is forcibly disrobed by villainous Dussasana, calls with faith Hari, Sri Krishna, for help—and a miracle happens!

. . As Dussasana dared the outrage
    there come robe after robe

by the grace of the Lord;
    they came without end,
clothes of colours how many,
    and clothes innumerable!
Silk with golden hues,
    robes new, for ever new,
grew and clasped Draupadi
    as she stood with folded hands.
The clothes became a heap
    and bore stern witness
to the power of Hari's name.
    Tired Dussasana sank upon the floor...

P.N.

THE VOWS

Bhima

Then Bhima rose and spoke these words:
"By the gods above, by Sakti supreme,
By the lotus-born Goddess and by the Revealer
Of the Vedas, by Krishna, Lakshmi's Lord,
The guardian-deity of our race,
By Siva whose glance turned Kama
To ashes and whose golden feet
Discomfited the god of Death,
I swear this oath; this vow I take:
This unmanly wretch, Duryodhana,
Who shameless told our Draupadi,
Bright flame for careful cherishing,
"Come sit on my thigh",—
This son of a dog Duryodhana—

This wretch's thigh I will tear, and him
I will slay in the sight of these worthless kings!
Dussasana's shoulders I will rip open
And drink with joy the gushing blood.
O world, you shall behold these things!
Not mine these words! They are the words
Of God who knows no obstacle!
Make all this possible, Sakti supreme!"

Arjuna

Then Partha[1] rose and spoke: "I will
Slay in war this sinner Karna;
This I swear by our good friend Krishna,
Hallowed, glorious Vishnu Himself;
By the broad, dark eyes of Draupadi,
And by the bow Gandiva, I swear!
The wonders of warfare you shall see,
O world, at the time of that grim battle!"

Panchali

Then Devi Draupadi said: "Aum!
By Goddess Parasakti I swear!
This loosened hair I shall re-braid
After and only after I drench it
In the blended blood of two cursed sinners,
Dussasana and Duryodhana!
Till then unkempt this hair will stay!"
'Aum!' assented the Gods above.

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[1]Another name for Arjuna

'Aum!' thunder rumbled in the heavens.
The earth quaked, and a whirlwind rose
And darkened all the sky with dust.
Thus did even the elements five
Bear witness to the sovereignty
Of Yudhishthira over all the earth.

AND so we end our narrative
Wishing the world all happiness.

—N. B.

PROSE POEMS

Bharati was a pioneer in introducing prose poems in Tamil. The few powerful pieces he composed seem to hark back to the Vedas, possibly under the influence of Sri Aurobindo, V. V. S. Iyer, Subramania Siva and Mandayam Srinivasachar in his Pondicherry days.

Presented here are two original verses which Bharati himself composed in English in 1915 and a translaled excerpt from "Sakti". *The last long prose poem "Wind" is a dextrous translation specially done for this compilation by Dr. A.K. Ramanujan of the University of Chicago.*

(60)

TRUTH[1]

Ever will I trust in thee, O Truth.
In the temple of my heart shalt thou ever shine.
Keep thou my vision, true star of our stormiest
 nights,
Mother of Liberty, maker of strength,
Bride of the four-faced Lord who made these worlds.
O thou, white River of Bliss,
Soul of Being and its only light,
Hold thou my tongue.
Ever will I trust in thee, O Truth;
Not all the fiends of the triple world shall prevent
 me.
In the temple of my heart shalt thou shine for ever.

[1]Original in English by Bharati

(61)

TIME—A VISION[1]

It was a mighty torrent with a breaking, maddening,
terrible speed.
Like that of the flaming forces that leap through the
wilds of the mind.
I saw it was Time.

And we were a few that watched its course from the bank
When a powerful desire did seize us
And we leaped in the midst of the tumult, the force
and rage of the torrent.

Then Hands came down to lead us; and we swam
divinely on
Against the mad career of this Doom in a torrent's form.
Onward, onward, onward, higher and still higher,
Precipice growing on precipice, further, dizzier ever.

My comrades and I did swim on and great was the joy of
this swimming,
This ride on the waters of Time, this touch of the forces of
law;
This sovran race on the tides that aeons are called
amongst men.

[1]Original in English by Bharati

At last I was tired of this play and I called to my comrades, saying :
"Stay! let us land on that bank with groves and hills and fields,
Have some taste of summer dreams and then plunge back in the torrent."

Some came, but the others sped on with a grand disdain for repose.

That bank is the realm called 'Life' and that race is the race of the spirits.

(62)

SAKTI

The snake charmer plays on his pipe.
Was the music born of the pipe
Or its hole, or the piper's breath?
Born in his heart, it comes out of the pipe.

The heart does not beat by itself.
The pipe does not sing by itself.
The heart clings
Not to the pipe but the breath,
And the pipe sings.
This is the *lila* of Sakti.

In the heart's core she sings,
In the hole of the pipe it is heard.
That which reconciles discordant things
And out of them all brings
Harmony is Sakti.

The gypsy children shout for alms.
Who attunes their voice
To the music of the pipe
Of the snake charmer?
Sakti.

There goes someone shouting

In the same pitch
"Zari, old zari, I buy."

Ah! I have found the meaning.
In the snake charmer,
The gypsy children and the zari-dealer,
One same life, the life of Sakti, plays.
Long live Sakti!

—K.S.

Pambup-pidaran kuzhal

(63)

WIND

A canopy on the verandah of a house. A canopy of
fronds, coconut fronds.
Seven or eight zigzag bamboo sticks tied together with
ordinary rope,
And coconut fronds spread over it.
On one of the bamboos, hangs a piece of extra rope,
A piece of rope, a span in length.
One day it was happily swinging.
It seemed to have not a care in the world.
It would stay still without a movement sometimes.
Even if you called, it wouldn't answer.
It wasn't like that today. 'Jolly' was the word.
This piece of rope and I were friends.
We would talk to each other now and then.
"If you talk to a piece of rope, will it answer?", you
may ask.
Talk to a rope and see for yourself whether you get an
answer.
But talk to it when it is happy.
If not, it will turn its face away and say not a word,
like women.
Whatever that be, the rope in this house
Will talk. There is no doubt about it.
Did I say, one piece of rope? No, there were two.
One was a span long, the other was three-fourths of a span.

One was male; the other, female; husband and wife.
The two of them
Were exchanging amorous looks,
Smiling a lot at each other,
Engaging in banter,
Quite absorbed in each other.
I happened to arrive there just then.
The he-rope was called Kandan.
The she-rope was Valliyammai.
Just as you name people,
You can name ropes too.
Kandan tries to put his hand on Valli's shoulder.
Valli sidesteps him.
That's when I arrived.
"Kanda, how's everything, okay?
I seem to have come at the wrong time.
Shall I come some other time?" I asked.
Kandan said, "What's the matter with you?
You're such a Vedic puritan.
We're not shy in your company; are we, Valli?
Are you upset that this Ayyar
Saw us carrying on?"
"Don't ask me such things," said Valli.
Kandan laughed aloud,
Jumped up and down clapping his hands,
And hugged Valli suddenly.
Valli screeched and struggled.
But in her heart Valli was delighted.
Aren't we happy when others watch our happiness?
It gives one satisfaction to watch their antics.
What's wrong with telling you what's true?
Young lovers' billing and cooing

Is a pleasure to the eye, isn't it?
When Valli got too noisy in her protest,
Kandan let go.
A few minutes later, he went back and hugged her.
Screeches again, then letting go;
Hugging again; screeches again.
And so it went.
"What, Kanda, you haven't said a word
to me, your visitor?
Shall I come another time?" I said.
"What's the matter with you? You Vedic types. Kill-
joys.
Just watch the fun, as you're doing, a bit longer.
I've to settle some things with this woman.
Then I'd like to talk some things over with you.
Don't go yet, stay," it said.
So I stood there and watched them.
After a little while, in tne ecstasy of loving
Even the female forgot that I was standing there,
Lost her shyness. She began to sing.
Short songs.
A different tune for each line. And just two variations.
Then another song.
As soon as Kandan finished, Valli began her song.
One after another, they sang. A merry pandemonium.
They didn't even touch for a while as they sang,
Then Valli would touch him and tease Kandan.
He would go towards her and try to hold her.
She would run. Pandemonium again.
This went on for a long time.
and Valli was getting really high.

I was thirsty and went next door
To get a drink of water.
When I came back,
Valli was fast asleep.
Kandan was waiting for me.
As soon as he saw me, he said,
"Where did you go, Vedic?
You skipped away without telling me."
"The lady is fast asleep," I said.
Oh! how can I describe
The glory of the god who burst out of that rope
And stood before me?
The wind god.
I had imagined he would be big in body.
It was a diamond needle, a body of light.
"*Namaste Vāyo, tvameva pratyaksham Brahmāsi.*"
I salute you, wind. You are God made visible to
human eyes.
When he appeared, the whole sky
was filled with life force, and flames blew about.
I bowed to him a thousand times, with cupped hands.
The wind god said:
"Son, what was your question?
You ask if that little piece of rope is asleep?
No, it is dead.
I am the life force.
Bodies that connect with me live and move.
What does not, is a corpse. I am the breath of life.
Because of me, that little piece of rope breathed, lived,
Found joy. When it grew tired, I let it sleep,
die.
Sleep too is death, and death is only sleep.

Where I am, neither of them are.
I'll come back in the evening and blow life into it.
It will live again. I'll open its eyes. Make it move.
I'm the son of Energy, the great goddess.
Worship me and live."
Namaste Vāyo, tvameva pratyaksham Brahmāsi
Tvameva pratyaksham Brahma vadisyāmi

(2)

A ship, alone, in the middle of the sea.
A hurricane blowing like the wrath of the skies.
Waves crash, a blast of spray,
they explode, they plunder.
The ship is desolate.
In a flash, it is raised high
and dashed on rocks.
It's finished.
Two hundred lives perish.
As they go, they have the experience of a doomsday
at the end of a cycle of time.
The end of time would be like this,
the world flows in water, liquid fire;
Sakti, the goddess becomes the wind.
Siva is in a frenzy.
One knows then the world is one,
that it is 'Sakti'.
The wind shakes the ropes of the canopy,
blows life into them.
He shows the whirlpool in the water, puts lightning
in the sky, turns water into particles of dust,
and dust into water.

He goes wild and becomes a tempest,
Wind brings on the end of time's cycle.
Wind protects.
May he protect us.
Namaste Vāyo, tvameva pratyaksham Brahmāsi.

(3)

The ear is the dwelling place of the wind.
Wind dwells in the ear of Siva.
If there's no wind, Siva cannot hear.
The wind has no ears.
He is deaf.
Would anyone who can hear make such noises?
Would anyone with ears dash clouds against one
another
for fun and make them sound their thunder?
Would anyone with ears stir up the sea in play?
We bow to the wind, to sound, to power.

(4)

Desert.
Sand, sand, sand, for miles and miles the level sands in
all four directions.
Evening.
A caravan of merchants on camels move through the
desert.
The wind arrives, the rogue, the villain.
The sands of the desert whirl in the sky.
An instant of death's agony. The entire caravan
perishes in the sand.

The wind is cruel. He is the Howler[1]. His sounds
terrify.
His acts are savage.
We praise him.

(5)

The old myths say Bhima and Hanuman are the sons
of the wind.
The Veda says, all breathing things are children of the
wind.
The breath is wind.
Breath is substance, the wind is its action.
Mother Earth is alive.
The air on the earth is of her breathing.
The wind is the breath of life. He is the one who
destroys lives.
The wind is the breath of life. Therefore, lives do not die.
The little breath joins the great breath.
There is no death.
The entire universe is the dwelling place of breath.
Coming into being, growing, changing, vanishing—all
these are the wind's doing.
We praise the wind.

(6)

Wind, come,
come bearing pollen, come carrying the sweet scent
that sends the mind into a swoon.
Brush against leaves, rub against waves of water, and

[1]Rudra

bring us the sap of life.
Come.
Blow hard, make it so that our life's fire may give us
a lasting glow of light.
Do not put it out when it is feeble.
Do not blow like a demon and kill it.
Blow softly, rhythmically, keep blowing
for a long while,
We sing songs to you.
We worship you.

(7)

Look at the tiny ant.
How tiny!
In it are hands, legs, mouth, belly, all the organs of
life kept in place.
Who put them there? The great goddess, Sakti.
All the organs work smoothly.
The ant eats, sleeps, mates, gives birth, runs, seeks,
makes war, defends territory.
The source of all this is the wind.
The great goddess plays the game of life and the
wind is her instrument.
We sing the wind.
It stands as courage in the act of knowing;
becomes love and hate in the heart;
is the breath in the breath of life.
In the world without, we know its actions, yet we
know it not.
Bless this god of winds.

(8)

The season of rains.
Evening.
Cold wind blows.
The sick man covers his body
to no purpose.
You cannot fear the wind and live happily in the world.
Your breath is wind. How can you live scared of your
breath?
May the wind blow on us.
May it guard us from sicknesses.
The mountain breeze is good.
The winds of the sky are good.
Men make the air of the city their enemy.
They do not worship the wind god.
So the wind god rages and wipes them out.
Let's bow to the wind god.
There should be no mud in his path, no evil smells,
no litter of rotting things, no dust.
There should be nothing unclean.
Here comes the wind.
Let us wipe clean his pathways, let us sprinkle water on
them.
Let us make groves and flowering arbours in his path-
ways.
Let us burn camphor and such fragrant things in his
pathways.
May he come as a healer.
May he come as our breath of life.
As elixir, ambrosia.
We worship the wind.

He is the son of Sakti, the darling of the Queen.
We shout our welcome.
Bless him.

(9)

Wind, come softly.
Don't break the shutters of the windows.
Don't scatter the papers.
Don't throw down the books on the shelf.
Look now what you did: there, you threw them down.
You tore the pages of the books.
Brought rain again.
You're very clever at poking fun at weaklings.
Delicate, crumbling houses, crumbling doors, crumbling
rafters,
Crumbling wood, crumbling bodies, crumbling lives,
crumbling hearts—
The wind god winnows and crushes them all.
He'll not do what you tell him.
Therefore, men, come,
Let us build strong homes,
Joint the doors firmly.
Practise to firm the body.
Make the heart steadfast.
Do this, and the wind will be friend with us.
The wind blows out weak fires.
He makes strong fires roar and flourish.
His friendship is good.
We praise him every day.

(10)

The rain pours.
The whole town is wet.
The Tamil people stand like water buffaloes in the
wet forever, sit on the wetness,
walk on the wetness, sleep on the wetness,
they cook on the wetness, they eat on the
wetness.
You cannot find a dry Tamilian even for a medical
specimen.
The cold wind blows ceaselessly.
Some of the Tamilians are down with a fever.
Every day some die, and the surviving idiots say,
"That's fate."
Yes, fool, nothing but fate.
'No happiness for the fool,' says one of god's laws.
In a land without science, diseases multiply: that's the
rule.[1]
There are no sciences in Tamil country. Instead of
raising true sciences, forgetting even
the ones that were there,
The brahmins of Tamil country tell lying tales
To fools and fill their bellies.
You think the cold wind is poison?
It is ambrosia: if you live in dry houses and wear
proper clothes,
Wind is good.
We worship him.

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[1]Bharati plays on three meanings of *viti* (Sanskrit *vidhi*): 'fate, law, rule'.

(11)

Wind is another name for Sakti, Energy.
Sakti, the power that raises, the power that
sweeps, the power that dashes, the power that makes
things whirl, the power that blows.
Wind is one of the many forms of Sakti.
All gods are digits[1] of Sakti.
We call them gods, they are the digits of Sakti.
The wind is Sakti's son.
We worship him.

(12)

The crow flies.
It swims on waves of air.
What is it that's like the waves and what upholds the
flight of the crow? The air.
No, that is not the wind.
That is the locus of the wind, the sphere of the wind.
When the wind blows, invisible to the eye, subtle
particles of the element bombard us.
It's the custom of the world to call these particles the
wind.
They are not the wind; they are the chariots he rides.
If heat touches ice, it changes into water.
If one heats water, it changes into 'air'.
If one heats gold, it melts into liquid. If one heats
that liquid, it becomes the 'air'.
Thus one may bring all objects of the world to

[1]digits: *kalā*, parts, as in 'digits of the moon'.

a state of 'air'.
This 'air' is a dust, elemental particles.
We call the power that comes riding them,
the wind god, and bow to him.
The path of the crow's flight is not the wind.
What makes that path is the wind.
It is he who propels the crow in its path.
We bow to him.
We salute him with the breath of our lives.

(13)

Is there life in the leaf that stirs? Yes, there is.
Does the roaring sea throb with life? Yes, it does.
The stone falls to the ground from the roof. What
gives it movement? The presence of life.
What is the state of the water that runs in the canal?
The state of being alive.
The wind was mute, now it blows its trumpets.
What's happening to it? Life.
The bullock draws the cart. The bullock's life enters
the cart. When the cart moves, it moves with
life too.
The paper-kite in the wind? It is alive.
The steam engine is alive, alive in a big way.
All machines have life.
The earth-ball revolves ceaselessly with great speed.
Mother Earth, she has life without end.
So everything in her sacred body has life.
Everything revolves.
The moon revolves. The sun revolves.
Billions and billions and billions of miles away, beyond it,

beyond even that, the stars that lie scattered in
the space beyond, are revolving tirelessly.
Therefore, this universe is alive.
We call the breath of the universe, wind.
We praise him in all three tenses of time, and we bless
him.

(14)

We cannot praise the wind.
There is no end to his praise.
Sages say, in praise of him, "Pratyaksham Brahma",
the visible god.
We bow to the Breath of Life. May he protect us.
We bow to Apāna. May he protect us.
We bow to Vyāna. May he protect us.
We bow to Udāna. May he protect us.
We bow to Samāna.[1] May he protect us.
We spread news of the wind's doings.
We bow to the breath of life.
Bless the breath of life.

(15)

Breath of life, who knows your greatness?
You are the god before our very eyes.
All laws are formed by you.
All laws are destroyed by you.
Life's breath,
you are wind, you are fire, you are water,

[1]Five kinds of breath, each with a different function.

you are sky.
In things that come to be, you are the way
they come to be.
To change things that change is your task.
The flying insect, the murderous tiger, the creeping
worm,
the numberless lives on this earth, communities
of lives beyond count in countless worlds,
all these are your unfolding.
We think of the lives that crowd earth, water and air.
In a cubic foot of air, millions of minute beings
live invisibly.
One huge animal; many small animals live in its body;
within each, many animals smaller than they;
within each of these, many even smaller ones;
and so on, this universe is crammed with lives;
The great cosmos, the greater cosmos, the macrocosm
bigger than that,
a molecule, an atom, particles smaller than that,
microcosms smaller still—
there is no end to it in either direction. It is infinite
on both sides.
Poets, let us praise all beings as we wake in the
morning.
Namaste Vāyo, tvameva pratyaksham Brahmāsi.

—A.K. Ramanujan

Oru veettu maadiyile

PART II

PROSE

(1)

HENCEFORTH

Let bygones be bygones, let us now think of the future.

The priests in our temples could win the hearts of our countrymen if they spoke frankly—they should never hold back anything, never deceive.

'When God is omnipresent, why have a temple? Why plant an idol of stone or copper there and make a rule that all should come and worship there?'

Answer: to create unity among the people.

Who can believe that God exists in that stone alone, and doesn't exist in all these people around us?

Look! The elemental force which moves this world and the whole cosmos—the same force manifests itself in the countless forms of life around us.

This is the ultimate truth contained in the Vedas. 'He who sees the world in himself and himself in the world, he alone sees truly'—this was the creed of our ancestors.

Your self, and that of the world, are one and the same. Yourself, myself, crocodile, tortoise, fly, eagle, donkey—all are one life and that life is God.

Our ancestors created temples in the hope that the

[1]This and the following few articles are among those published in *Swadesamitran* between 1915 and 1917 (exact dates are not known).

minds of the people, assembling there for worship, would meet and merge and be enabled to realise the oneness of the Self.

The temple can bring about unity among the townfolk. An image in each house creates unity within the family.

Listen, you men. I shall tell you in plain Tamil. The goddesses that you worship represent the greatness of Supreme Sakti latent in your own mother, wife, sister, or daughter. When you worship *Amman* (Mother Deity), you are in effect praying for the glory of all womanhood.

The male gods, similarly, represent the heights to be attained by you, your father, your son and brothers.

You are Siva; your wife is Sakti.

You are Vishnu; your wife is Lakshmi.

You are Brahma; your wife is Saraswati.

This is the message of our temples, which are only divine schools for elevating man from his animal state to the divine state.

The priests try to hide this truth. It suits them if the devotees remain for ever slaves and they—the priests—are considered the only divine beings. But he who wants to enslave others can never be divine.

Many priests pose as divine beings and extract money from the devotees.

But the cleverest lie is short-lived.

How long can a cheat pose as a divine being?

The priests stand exposed. People therefore disregard them and continue to worship the stone image—out of sheer habit. This stone can grant you no boon. As a general rule, when good and pious people worship

a piece of stone uttering mantras God comes straight and dances there. Conversely, if and when an unworthy priest touches the stone, God deserts it and is reduced to the state of a cobble in the street.

Whether or no you go to the temple, whether or no you worship God, if you stop deceiving others, God's grace will be with you. If one gains the perfect strength never to cheat others in the slightest degree, one becomes God. Even with sparrow, crow, worm, or ant, one must keep faith. Banish deceit and say to yourself: "Somehow we are in this world and God shall show us the way." Just float along, like a log afloat on a river. He who surrenders himself thus to God entirely attains godhead. There is no doubt about it.

Kali Yuga[1] will last as long as man treats weaker beings unfairly. Once injustice disappears, *kali*, too, will disappear and disappear from the world. "There is no reason to think that injustice will disappear from the world in the near future, and Krita Yuga[2] will come. Why should I alone be just and fair?" Let no one think perversely on these lines and keep walking on the path of injustice. For him who gives up injustice, Krita Yuga is his that moment. There is no doubt about it. If one man smashes *kali*, ten others see him and at once smash *kali*. In this way, one becomes ten, ten hundred, hundred ten thousand and so on. Yes, human beings are already on the threshold of

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[1]Age of Conflicts (*vide* also footnote 1 on page 55. According to Hindu mythology, Kali Yuga started after the conclusion of the *Mahabharata* War variously dated between 5000 B.C. and 1500 B.C.

[2]Age of Truth and Enlightenment

Satya Yuga.[1] The time when Satya Yuga will spread throughout mankind has already begun. There is no doubt about it.

—K. S. Sundaram ("Aadavan")

[1]Same as Krita Yuga

(2)

COURAGE

Sanskrit, held sacred by our ancestors, and hence by us too, is a wonderful language indeed. Rightly it has been called the speech divine.

There is a word in that language called '*dhairya*', meaning courage. Courage is the attribute of a *dheera* or brave man. The root word of *dheera* really means 'intelligent' man. It is one of the glories of the Sanskrit language that both 'brave man' and 'intelligent man' are denoted by the same word.

No other language in the world has a word which can at the same time convey both these ideas. This shows that our ancestors regarded the courageous man as a man of intellect. If a coward claims to be an intelligent being because he has learnt the Shastras, do not believe him. Spit in his face and tell him: 'You might, like silver fish, have pierced through a number of books and wasted your life. But as long as there is fear in your mind, you cannot be an intellectual. Our ancestors have used the same word for fearlessness and intellect. Perhaps you do not know this.'

Fear is foolishness. Fearlessness is intelligence. He who becomes afraid when mishaps occur in life, is a fool. Even if he has read a lot of Shastras he is still a fool. He who remains unruffled by mishaps and tries, bravely, to overcome them is a *jnani*. Even if he can-

not write 'Hari Om', he is nonetheless a *jnani*.

Raja Sivaji, through his own efforts, helped only by his courage and sharpness of mind, ended the despotic rule of Aurangzeb, established the Mahratta kingdom and restored dharma. He had no bookish knowledge. Nowadays there are people who study in English schools, pass examinations and are prepared to trade their dharma and their soul for a paltry fifteen-rupee job. The only result of all their reading is a weakened eyesight. Sivaji, on the other hand, gained a whole kingdom. Which of the two is better? Who is more intelligent?

There are people who say that for a true renaissance to happen in India, education is the first step. But I say: let us first cultivate courage. Courage is the mother; from her, education and all other benefits are born.

—K.S.S.

(3)

SOCIETY

There may yet come along a great soul who will teach men the way, the recipe, to live for a hundred years without fear. If man discards sin he can attain immortality. "The wages of sin are death," says the Bible. A time may come when men would leave off sin and overcome death.

But as of today there is no surety about the life of humans on this earth. 'One who is here today, will he be here tomorrow, we can't be certain,' said poet Taayumanavar.

We arrive from somewhere, live here in this world for a few days. Who knows what happens to us after death? God alone knows. Why not spend our brief sojourn here happily? How many ills the humans are subjected to on this earth! How many obstacles, murders, betrayals, lies, oppression, injustice. Poor things!

O men! We abide by so many Shastras, commands and accepted norms : can't we abide by one more norm? This norm being : 'Let us not even think of causing harm to others. Let us not be afraid of each other.' Men, we shall take this pledge. This is the way to live.

Perfect strangers, walking on the streets, look at each other with anger, disdain, or fear. This is where your foolish human civilisation has brought us, each

man considers other men his enemies. We should change this, and make love the basis of life.

First, we should change the system where a few have food far in excess of what they need, and many are dying for want of food; this is number one. A few have put up fences and declared as their own much of God's property on this earth—agricultural lands, gardens, wells, mines, rivers, waterfalls, even rubbish. Most people own only the sky above their head, have to eat only the wind. The only cure for this is for the rich to realise that all men are brothers and feed the poor, banishing hunger.

* * *

Love is the answer. Inside all human beings—men, women, children, white men, yellow men, brown men, black negroes—*Paramatma*, the Supreme Person, Narayana Himself, abides as the Inner Self and performs actions. Hence, I say 'love your brethren.' The 'brotherhood of man' is the answer. It is sure enough extolled in poetry, books on ethics, and contemporary journals. But it is not being put into practice in any corner of any continent. This should come about. A blind man cannot study astronomy. Happiness is a commodity belonging to the world of love; hence where there is no love there can be no happiness. O ye men, who are seeking happiness everywhere, listen.

Buddha discovered and declared that if there be love there is happiness. But men have failed to realise the truth of this message, have failed to benefit from it. It is not enough to preach love, you should practise it too. If you, being a millionaire, have the courage to donate

your million for the benefit of the country and become a pauper, then you are a true lover of your country. If, for the sake of saving your child, you have the courage to fight a tiger, then you have real love for your child. If you make a *pariah* sit by your side and share your dinner with him, then you are a genuine lover of humanity.

—K.S.S.

(4)

PRINCIPLE AND ACTION

What is principle? We must understand it clearly, for, there are men who act all the time but without principles. An un-reasoning man cannot have a principle. A man with a principle must be a reasoning, a rational, being.

There is a village. All the villagers belong to the same caste and are bandits. For generations they have lived by banditry. If one of them whose father, brother, uncle, grandfather and friends are bandits, takes to banditry, it is not out of having a principle. He may be a reasoning man; but he is not acting on the basis of what his reason has shown him as the path of life. So also millions of men live and die without becoming conscious of any principle, right or wrong and following it.

So what is a principle? A principle is an idea which is the basis, the foundation, of a course of action accepted and undertaken for his entire life by a man who has applied his reason to the pros and cons, to the rights and wrongs of the problem.

There are many in our land capable of such choice; but to choose a principle is far different from acting in accordance with it. If a man accepts a principle but is unable to act in accord, he is but a living corpse.

Thus there are two groups of men—one without

principles, the other with principles but incapable of acting in accord. These two groups are not harmful to humanity. They are only a burden to the land.

But, there is another section of men who have come up; those who are like the white ants, like the tubercle bacilli which eat away the body in which they live. Their heads are stuffed with grand principles. They sell them for a livelihood. They preach it from a thousand rostrums. And when the populace mistake them for Mahatmas, they revel in being worshipped.

But if you follow them home, you find a dung-heap, and they shamelessly tell you: 'Do as we say and not as we do.' And the turncoats also change principles with great facility.

Measureless is the harm done to our land by these wretches, for, many an innocent treads the evil path following them. We want principles and not men. If a man does not follow the principles he himself advocates, we do not want him...

* * *

We Indians have lost all our liberties to men of a white race come from somewhere. We are thirty crores and they a mere two lakhs. The world looks at this as a wonder. The world does not think the English are brave or strong. On the contrary they despise us. An Indian is despised and spat upon everywhere. The world thinks that anybody can easily rule India. So, this is not the time for us to pose. Let us twirl our moustache when we are free. Now we are only laughed at.

Every Indian man or woman can now have only one principle, to become free and live respected and

feared. All obstacles on this path shall be destroyed. In following this principle, thought of happiness, wealth, prestige and family should not hinder us. We must be ready to lose all these.

Body's pain unnoticed and hunger too.
Sleepless and heedless of pain.
Heedless too of insult and injury.
Eyes set only on the goal.

That should be our attitude. If we cannot, let us back out as cowards. No business to call ourselves liberty-loving Indians.

O! You Indian! A lazy man cannot have a principle. Don't heed the rain and sun, hunger and thirst. If our body itself is a temporary thing, how much more so its feelings. You can't desert your country because of the body's pain or for its comfort. God is eternal and Truth is victory. You should become free and you should liberate the enslaved in other lands. Bharata Mata, as of old, should be the *tilak* of the world. Thrice I repeat, stick to this, stick to this, stick to this. *Vande mataram.*

—M. Ramaswami

(5)

THE SPARROW

A tiny grain-like nose; small eyes, a small head; white neck; a delightful silken belly of a dull white hue; a back of grey silk in which black and white mingle; a small feathery tail; two drops of legs.

All these an infant's palm can hold. Carrying such a body two beings live in my house—one male, another female. They talk to each other, gather food, build nests, lead a happy love-life and protect their young ones from hunger.

When I see a sparrow fly I often grow jealous. How gracefully it carries its body! Does the sparrow get a headache? Hm! I don't think so. One can't have such a clear face having had a headache even once!

Fear and self-respect the sparrow has even as man. Yet, the worries that worm themselves into the heart of man by the minute, and the myriads of ills they cause, seem to be alien to the sparrow.

God! Won't you give me a pair of wings? Will I not shake off these accursed human multitudes and their way of life, its shackles, its ills, tribulations and lies, and fly in the skies as I please?

Oh! How many lands can I see, how many realms, how many flowers, how many mountains, how many springs, how many rivers, how many expanses of oceans!

Sunlight, rain, wind and snow my body would be served with in plenty and these would beget not sickness but joy, always.

This state, will you not bless me with? The sparrow can talk, but not utter lies! The sparrow has a house to live in, but no taxes to pay. The sparrow gets its food and does work but it has no masters to serve!

God! Won't you give me such a life! True, you have blessed me with a few great things the sparrow has been denied. Learning, devotion, music and poetry are certain joys available to man, and not to the sparrow. Yet, will not my cup of joy be full if both the states are combined in me?

What does the sparrow say? It cries out '*vidu*', '*vidu*' (Leave it! Leave it). It seems to me that God is teaching me in sparrow Tamil the path to the joy I have been seeking.

"*Vidu, vidu, vidu*"—Leave it off!—not your work, not food, not your mate, not your nest, not your young ones! Cast off your worries, the shackles that bind your heart! Leave off your sorrows!

This path is easy to speak of. It is not easy to understand fully. Even if understood, it is hard to follow—real, real, real hard.

From the root '*vidu*' has been derived the word "*veedu*", meaning 'release', 'freedom'. In Sanskrit this state is called '*mukti*'. Most people yearn to attain it after death. It would be better to wish for it in this very life, here and now!

Freedom is the only way to joy. The free turn poverty into affluence. They overcome weakness and

disease and become strong and stalwart. They discard pettiness and become noble. Sorrow leaves them and they realise happiness.

Come, my heart, let us address Parasakti and chant a few 'mantras'—

"I shall become free; my shackles will fall off. I shall become free and act always according to my own free will. Let not my free will harm others nor cause me harm; I shall desire only the good. Let my Life Force grow in strength from moment to moment so that I may practise these precepts always. I shall have the will to live—a will to withstand any thunderbolt.

"I desire knowledge that sees the truth in everything; the knowledge that gives strength and keeps fear out.

"I shall do no harm to others and no harm shall befall me.

"Oh! Parasakti! By thy grace I shall attain freedom in this very world!"

—K. Ramasubramanian

(6)

TECHNICAL VOCABULARY IN TAMIL

It is a well-known fact that Europeans are far ahead of us in research on the properties of matter. Hence, many scholars here are eager to translate books on Physics, as prevalent in Europe, into Tamil. Already some portions of these books have been translated into Tamil. These efforts will continue; they have to. A committee of scholars may be formed to render all these scientific texts in Tamil. Wiser counsel may yet prevail among our rajahs, zamindars and chettiars, and they may undertake to enrich Tamil with modern scientific thought, employing competent scholars.

First Step

Before this is done, there is a basic task to be undertaken by the scholars. They should, as far as possible, evolve a standard set of technical terms. Thereafter the translators would not face much of a problem.

With a view to standardising technical terminology (in Tamil), Sri Chakravarti Rajagopalachari and Sri Venkatasubbiah have started publishing from Salem a journal called 'Journal of Tamil Technical Vocabulary Association'. An Association of this name has been set up in Salem. The Secretary of this Association is Sri Ramanathayyar who teaches natural sciences at the local college.

The first issue of this journal from Salem is in English. The reasons advanced by Sri Rajagopalachari for having commenced to write in English instead of Tamil on this topic relevant to the Tamils do not appear very convincing to me. But, it seems, a Tamil section would be added to the journal soon. Most probably the second issue itself may carry a Tamil section. If this is done there is no doubt that the journal would prove very useful to the people of Tamil Nadu.

How to Coin Technical Terms

In Benaras, the 'Nagari Pracharini Sabha' is coining Sanskrit equivalents for terms in the European languages and compiling a big dictionary. These words could be made to serve the needs of all languages in our country, simultaneously. European languages in a similar fashion have adopted common Latin and Greek technical terms. By doing this there would be uniformity in technical terms among all our Indian languages. That would make it easier for Science to develop and flourish all over our country.

* * *

—K.S.S.

(7)

THE WORKERS

The Relationship between Labour and Wealth

Wealth grows out of labour. Intelligence harvests it. Industry creates wealth. Intelligence directs industry.

"How", you might ask, "can you say that intelligence and industry create and accumulate great wealth? We see dullards and fools strutting about as emperors and kings, landlords and capitalists handling untold wealth." I will explain.

Though many a nitwit is now owner of vast riches, this wealth arose from the ability and industry of one or more of his ancestors. Intelligence alone is not enough. Allied to it must be perseverance, absence of laziness (sloth) and hard labour. Only then wealth accumulates. "History tells us of kings who by sheer brute force and vast armies acquired vast tracts of the earth and untold riches. How, then, can it be said that intelligence is the basis of wealth?"

Though war is brutal and rightly considered a base activity, sheer brute force is not sufficient for victory. The science of war is very complex. Force is only the tool; intelligence is the activating power behind. Even among dacoits the leader is the clever one. Many abilities have been considered, from immemorial times,

as basic and essential in military science. As for modern warfare, it is the accomplished technicians who are basic thereto.

Intelligence has ever been the essential ability in the peaceful fields of commerce and industry as well. Without brains behind, in these days even for a moment these cannot survive.

* * * *

Nowadays, many trade unions are being founded in our land. They fight for greater wages and lesser working hours. This is undoubtedly just and proper.

But, they should not rest with this. They should establish thousands of institutions where workers, young and old, can obtain education. Not only day-schools but also night-schools are needed.

Intelligence is Power

Education is the fount of wealth. There is a foolish superstition in our land that Lakshmi and Saraswati are like a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law and that wealth and education do not go together. It cannot be denied that those who expend their knowledge in the process of writing unintelligibly with inane descriptions never acquire wealth. The superstition emerged from such examples. Today, it is not correct. Intelligible literary creation today, in these days of printing and universal education, will lead to riches for the writer. Occupational training and functional education allied with application leads to wealth for their votaries. Hence, O! Worker! get education for yourself and your children.

A Few Words to Workers

The export of mill-made cloth from Europe to the far ends of the world remedied the problems of unemployment in Europe; but the class conflicts between the workers and the capitalists did not cease; on the contrary they multiplied. The reason was growing power of the unions. Every factory employed thousands of workers and many amongst them got educated.

Another pervasive idea was spreading fast among the workers. This was the idea of equality between man and man, the idea that law should be the same for the rich and the poor, for the low-born and the high, the idea that in social regard and for the necessaries of life no discrimination should exist between man and man. These ideas from 18th century France burgeoned into a powerful influence amongst the workers. The worker started pondering, "The capitalists wax rich selling the products of our labours; but we stay in slums and eat wretched food. They live in palatial homes. This is not equality. They contribute the capital and we the labour; we should share and share alike." Without the courage to ask for a half share and without any hope of getting a half share, the workers carried on a steady campaign for further and further increase in their wages.

They demanded comfortable houses; they asked for old age and sickness pensions. They wanted facilities for educating themselves and their children. They demanded diminished working hours. In all these matters, the workers have been gradually succeeding till today. The reasons for this are many.

Dignity of Labour

The relationship between the capitalist and the worker has become considerably strained. To resolve the misunderstandings between the two camps, to prevent the misery and loss that each causes to the other and to restore peace and goodwill between the two is a major problem. The solution of this problem appears to be beyond human power. Only the appearance on this earth of great men with spiritual powers beyond those seen till now can, it seems, solve peacefully this cataclysm in Europe.

"The workers should remain content with all that they have achieved in the last two centuries. What has been given to them is already too much; actually they should be curtailed. Hence, we cannot entertain any further demands," argue most capitalists. The workers, on the other hand, feel that the only way to have a proper voice in the sharing of the fruits of their labour is to obtain political power and the right to legislate.

Hence, in England and some other countries, the workers are striving for parliamentary control, for having their own men as ministers and thus have political power. But with the government of the land biased as it is now in favour of capital, the capitalists try all ways of keeping labour down. Thus, contrary to realising peace and understanding, the two camps find the gradual aggravation of distrust, misunderstanding and suspicion.

We do not want the emergence of such a situation in India. Europe too would not have had to face such

a problem if they had paid due heed to the necessity and dignity of labour. So, in India, during the dawn of industrial unrest and agitation the nation's leaders should in a friendly atmosphere advise both sides and help eradicate mistrust. Methods should be devised to stop the employers' treating labour inconsiderately. All men should be made to realise the prestige and importance of work.

—M. R.

(8)

VIVEKANANDA'S PATRIOTISM

A sannyasin is supposed to have renounced all worldly attachments. And yet Vivekananda had a sort of special feeling for his country. How could this go with the state of sannyasa, renunciation? So some ask. Such doubts have occurred to one of his own primary disciples, Nivedita Devi. She has been writing on Vivekananda in the journal *Prabuddha Bharata* for the past few months. In the current issue she has dwelt at some length on the conflict between the Swami's sannyasa and love of the motherland. We give below the substance of her argument.

'Love of motherland had struck deep roots in Vivekananda's very being. He could not brook to see Mother India standing as a slave ignorant of her inherent strength. That even this trace of attachment was part of *maya*, he knew well enough. Not only he, but his Master Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has spoken about it. "There is a light film of *maya* covering Vivekananda's mind. God has kept it there for some good purpose. It is a very thin film; Vivekananda will tear it off any moment"—so said Sri Ramakrishna.

But, thanks to our good fortune and by the grace of God, Vivekananda who had torn off all the other layers of *maya* yet retained his patriotic attachment for a very long time. The great seer has strongly emphasised

that, hard-core sannyasins apart, any body who has no attachment for his land is no better than a corpse.

However, in his last days, he started feeling 'oneness' even with those who were enemies of the motherland.

In the Sepoy Mutiny of 1858 an English soldier stabbed and killed a sannyasin. The sannyasin who had been observing a vow of silence for 15 years broke it only to tell his killer "You too are That (Brahman)" before he fell dead with a smile on his face. Our Swami used to cite this sannyasin as his model.'

—N.B.

India [Reproduced in *Kalaimagal*, June 1944]

(9)

TO THE WOMEN OF TAMIL NADU

The civilisation of the Tamils is as old as the Aryan civilisation, which latter is described in the old Sanskrit texts. There are various evidences for considering the Tamil civilisation to be as ancient as the Aryan civilisation. It was the belief of ancient Tamils that Sanskrit and Tamil were the two original languages created by Siva. This is no mere myth, but founded on solid historical evidence. You may ask, "Had God not granted speech to non-Tamils and non-Aryans?" Well, there were other languages too. But it was in these two languages that, for the first time in human history, great poetry, literature and other Shastras came to be written. The literatures in other languages came much later, and, in many cases, followed the literary modes in these two languages. That is, Aryans and Tamils were the earliest people to have developed civilisation in the world. That these two races, even in those early days, were bound together by the common bond of Hinduism to become a single entity, is a fact which should be counted as something most significant and fortunate in human history.

My dear sisters, women of Tamil Nadu! Because of this confluence of two great, ancient cultures in Tamil Nadu, you have in your safe-keeping a blend of Aryan-Dravidian culture which may in some ways be deemed

even superior to that prevalent in other regions of India.

It is your duty to foster and develop it further. For, as a rule, civilisations are created by men and nurtured by women. In mediaeval times Muslim culture came and clashed with Hinduism. But Hinduism, instead of going down under the attack, integrated into itself some salient features of Islam and emerged even more powerful than before. In recent times European culture has come to India. This too has merged well with the culture of our country. It would now be impossible to erase its effects from the minds of our countrymen. It has become an integral part of our national identity; it is now very much our own. Still, long debates, enquiries and researches have been going on among our scholars over many years as to whether this European culture is best discarded by us *in toto*; or whether we should adopt it fully; or whether we take only the good things in it and leave out the bad things. But this thing called European culture is not a concrete object. If it were, we could easily cut it into pieces, take what we want, and discard the rest. But human behaviour is something different; it is subtle, indivisible.

Those of us who want to assimilate the good things in European culture and discard the rest, point to cropping of the hair, smoking a cheroot, drinking, allowing women to mix freely with other men and the like as being the bad points in European culture which are to be discarded. On the other hand, these people say, we should emulate the Europeans' industriousness, tenacity, unity and their knack for amassing wealth, these being the good points of their civilisation. But people who talk thus are carried away by mere externals.

Cropping of hair, smoking cheroots, or drinking do not constitute the essence of European civilisation at all. Tobacco is the only substance we have newly imported here from America a few centuries back. It has spread all over the world through Europe. Europeans smoke it as cheroot, and our people started imitating this habit. The more orthodox among us merely chew it, or use it as snuff powder. Similarly, while it is true that the advent of Europeans in our country has led to an increase in the habit of drinking, it is not at all something new introduced here by the Europeans. It has been prevalent in our country from ancient times. The Puranas say that Balarama, brother of Sri Krishna and one of the *avatars*, was a great drinker; they also say that Krishna himself used to drink and that his people—Yadavas—perished entirely during a violent brawl following a drinking bout.

Regarding cheroot smoking as one of the basic tenets of Europeans, is like considering chewing of *paan*, inhaling of snuff powder, or having a tuft on one's head as the basic dharmas of Hindu religion. To equate these with the excessive freedom granted to women in the West betrays ignorance. Because, women's freedom is based on self-knowledge. It is one of the basic tenets of European culture that men and women are equal, and that they can both do whatever they fancy as long as their acts do not harm others.

Cropping of one's hair and the like are unimportant external customs which people adopt in keeping with the needs of a particular time with a view to comfort and trimness. Sometimes they may help a nation while harming others; sometimes they may even harm

the nation which adopts them. Of these, dress habits and other fashions centering around personal appearance never remain the same in any country. They keep changing. Even within the same country not everyone prefers the same kind of 'look' in dress and other externals. What one group considers as smart may seem ugly to another group.

For example, in Tamil Nadu, Brahmins and a few other communities shave off their moustache. But in Aryavarta—the land of the Vedas—Brahmins consider it a sacrilege to be without a moustache. Over there if someone shaves off his moustache it denotes a death in the family. Many years ago I joined an English school in Benaras called Jai Narayan College. Being a Tamil Brahmin I used to shave my face often, as was the custom among us. This astonished my class-mates greatly. They held long debates among themselves why this chap was shaving off his moustache but could find no satisfactory reason. At last one of them asked me: "Does someone die in your family every week?" I gathered from him the reason behind his enquiry and then told him: "This is the custom that Brahmins in Tamil Nadu follow."

Certain habits and rituals may have their basis in religion. But certain habits just evolve by chance without any rhyme or reason ... Hence let not our Tamil women worry too much over preserving external customs and mores.

Sisters! You need have no misgivings regarding the impact of European culture on us. It is not powerful enough to destroy our own customs. It is an ally, not a devil to be feared. Whenever two cultures come

together, the more powerful among the two wipes out the weaker one without a trace. Not only the language and religion of the weaker culture, but even unimportant external rituals like marriage customs and the like, are wiped out. Adherents of the weaker culture start adopting the language and religion of the stronger culture. American culture has won thus, in the Phillipines. But our Hindu culture is not weak like that. We need never worry that contact with other cultures would damage it. Our culture is more powerful than any other culture in the world. It is capable of swallowing any other culture. Hence, Hindu culture not only retains its basic characteristics after coming into contact with other cultures, but has attained more power and glow. Unless our women fully understand this they cannot properly tend their *swadharma*.

Sisters of Tamil Nadu! Though you have much competence and cleverness, owing to lack of education you have been unable to keep in touch with developments in the outside world and change yourselves accordingly. 'It is worth sacrificing one's life in order to defend one's *swadharma*,' says Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. But one's duties and obligations which fall in this category of '*swadharma*' are not to be confused with empty, meaningless rituals or habits. For example, not only for Tamil women but for women all over the civilised world, chastity is regarded as an important virtue or ideal. A woman can undergo any trials to defend it. But not so the quaint practice of wearing heavy gold ornaments in the ears—in the case of some women the ear lobes become elongated under the weight of these, often reaching up to the chest. Some

of our educated men would like to put an end to this practice, they would like their women to stitch up the hole in their ears. They would also like this habit to be discontinued in the case of their daughters. On this the women often disagree with their husbands and there are fierce arguments in many homes over this issue. These poor women are under the impression that, just like chastity, having a long ear lobe too is part of their *swadharma*. These ideas would vanish automatically with the spread of education among women. Whether it be family custom, custom of the country, or custom of the community, if women are to differentiate between those which are essential and those which are not, then education is the only answer. As long as women do not become as educated as men, the latter would not give them due respect, they would always treat them as inferior beings. Sisters of Tamil Nadu! It is better to die than to accept a lowly status and be regarded as inferior by one's husband, brothers or sons.

* * *

—K. S. S.

(10)

A COMMON LANGUAGE FOR INDIA

Mr Gandhi and some other leaders are of the opinion that Hindi may be used as a common language for India. But crest-jewel among our patriots, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, and many others say that Sanskrit alone is the common language of India, and that there is no new need to make it or develop it as the lingua franca since it has been so functioning from time immemorial. For instance, think of those times before the English started ruling over us; in what language could a Tamil king have corresponded with a ruler in Gujarat? If he wrote in Tamil the other would not understand it and he himself knew no Gujarati. So, is it not clear and obvious that the language of correspondence must have been in what the pundits, priests and ministers of both kingdoms were well-versed, that is Sanskrit?

Some say that studying and acquiring proficiency in Sanskrit is difficult and so it will not be practicable to make it the common language for the entire nation. This may be somewhat true if the language were studied in the old-fashioned way. But conditions have changed today. There is a learned man in Bombay called Bhandarkar, who has written textbooks for learning Sanskrit without the aid of a teacher in a matter of seven or eight months. The first of these books has already been translated into Tamil. The method

could be made still easier. Any one who goes through the *Panchatantra*, follows its meaning and memorizes it, will attain fluency in speaking in Sanskrit. It will of course take time to acquire the sophisticated style of a Bāna or a Bhatti; works like the *Panchatantra* written in a simple natural style should suffice now.

Indian Music

If Sanskrit alone should function as the common language of India, it follows that musical compositions for India as a whole will also be in the Sanskrit language. Sri Muttuswami Dikshitar, the eldest son and heir of Goddess of Indian Music, has already written wonderful *kirtans* in Sanskrit. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh once said, on listening to one of Dikshitar's compositions, that he had never in his life heard in India or Europe a song with such a marvellous fusion of diction and melody. We see some great men like the editor of *Swadesamitran*, Sri Rangaswami Ayyangar, are promoting the above-mentioned Dikshitar school of music. May their efforts succeed.

—N.B.

(11)

TEMPLES

The abundance of temples in our land is an indication of our centuries' old quest for inner peace, our desire for the higher life, even as other countries of the world were preoccupied with worldly (material) pleasures. Most of these temples date back to antiquity. They find mention in the devotional hymns of *Alwars* and *Nayanars*. Many other old texts, too, mention their glories. It is a well known fact that, at the time of *utsavas* or festivals at these temples, people arrive from far-away places, spending money, for *darshan*. Most of these temples are quite wealthy, generating funds from lands specially allotted to them. Add to this the cash offerings made by pilgrims.

Now for a close look at the management of our Hindu temples with such funds at their disposal. Normally the expenditure involved in daily pujas is very little. Salaries paid to the menials are also small. But the expenditure involved in holding big festivals—though mainly met through donations—is considerable indeed. Some of the bigger temples, which are left with a sizable sum after meeting all such expenses, generally spend this balance amount in a wasteful manner—in petty religious squabbles and other unholy pursuits.

Let us now consider how the churches of the

English people differ from our temples. They too have income and expenses. But the employees in churches are invariably educated, knowledgeable people. Among Englishmen, just like government service, commerce or practice of the law, service in the Church too is a career. Any educated person who feels dissatisfied in other professions, can opt for bishophood, a noble profession for them. In the olden days the English churches were places of learning as well.

There is no such system in India. During the days of the Hindu kings, there used to be schools attached to many temples where education was free. This practice continues now at a few temples where Sanskrit, Tamil and *Veda-adhyayana* are taught. But at many of the big temples the excess money is simply wasted, it is not used for imparting education. If education can help in creating among the people a better awareness of the role of the temples in spreading *bhakti,* if they can be made to understand that developing education leads to development of *bhakti*, then what is the objection in employing educated people in the temples?

Christian priests offer a good example of the synthesis of *bhakti* and education. Even though they have come to propagate their religion, they set up big schools at many places and help develop education. Hence if the excess money in our temples is used for educational purposes it will give immense satisfaction to our people. At Tirupati a portion of the temple funds are siphoned for running a school. Similarly, if at other major temples big schools are set up for teaching languages like Sanskrit and Tamil, if free education is imparted to those who cannot afford the fees, how helpful it will

prove in advancing our people, culturally and intellectually!

Some say that serving food at temples is foolish. In a way it is so, because at many places the facility is only exploited by some regular hangers on who have made it a way of life; and often genuine pilgrims coming from afar, for whose benefit the food is actually served, are deprived of what is actually theirs. Yet, it is *adharma* to say food should not be served at all at temples. Those who have had to travel a long distance for the *darshan*, deserve to be served food.

—K.S.S.

(12)

SRI KRISHNA AND DESPOTIC RULE

A ruler who is concerned only with his self-interest and, to further it, disregards the interests of others—even against his conscience—is a tyrant. The sceptre in a king's hand is referred to in Tamil as *Senkol*, meaning 'straight, upright sceptre'—the emblem of a just and impartial ruler who looks after the interests of his subjects.

A king should be free from thoughts like 'these are my people' and 'these are not my people'. Sri Rama said: "What higher merit can a good king seek than service to the world?"

There are on the contrary kings who levy unjust and heavy taxes on their subjects; trample under foot the rights of the people; let loose the army on the people to create terror—all this, for their benefit, for the benefit of their kith and kin and for the benefit of sycophants who hang around them. The sceptre of such a king is '*kodunkol*', meaning "crooked, cruel sceptre".

No tyrant ever remained stable for any length of time. What happened to Hiranya, Ravana, Kamsa and Duryodhana? An *avatar* of God is born then to destroy the despots and save the world.

Once there was a king called Venan who made people suffer under his oppressive rule. The rishis,

unable to stand it, cursed him and he died. Then with the power of their *tapas*, they created out of the king's body ten sons known as *prachetas* to rule over the world. What does Bhishma say in the *Mahabharata*? "If a ruler turns unjust, then his subjects can stone him to death just as they would a mad dog, it would be no sin," said Bhishma. King Louis XVI of France was beheaded by his subjects on similar grounds. Britishers who are now preaching to the Indians the virtue of loyalty to the Crown, once beheaded their King Charles I, and drove away James II out of their country. In Rome, Julius Caesar was held in high regard as long as he respected the rights of the people. Once he became ambitious and wanted to be king he was done to death by his own dear friend Brutus. At that instant Brutus, sinking his hand in his friend's blood, said: "I killed him because he was too ambitious." Were these empty words? Did he soil his hand with blood for nothing? No. Caesar indeed paid the price for ambition.

Such lust for power scoffs at compassion towards living beings; it comes to believe that the whole world is bound to toil under its command and indulges in evil deeds. There is no appeal against its acts however wrong or questionable they may be. All its efficiency is diverted along such evil paths. This greed is the greatest hindrance in establishing rule by a single king all over the world. Sometimes this greed is that of a single individual. Sometimes it afflicts an entire nation. Whosoever it may be, he who is not one among the masses and does not share their joys; he who does not regard the sufferings of the masses as his own; such a

man will never and can never do any good to anyone. Such a man possessed by the demon of greed may be very clever, very intelligent; but these gifts are only a curse for him and also a curse for the entire community. He creates for himself a desert in which the flower of his *buddhi* wastes its fragrance.

All great men who were born in this world to do good to the people really possessed a strong desire to meet the wishes of the people and they acted accordingly. They were more concerned with and desirous of uplifting the masses, than with raising their own status. They devoted their intellect, power and time to improving the lot of the masses and removing their ills. They taught them good sense so that they may raise themselves to a higher level. Whatever *jnana*, learning, competence and drive they possessed, these leaders never set themselves up as obstacles against the desires and aims of the people, never showed displeasure or revulsion or hatred towards the people. On the contrary, they mixed freely with the common folk, took on their customs and manners, and worked with them for their progress and prosperity. This has been the one important characteristic of all great men, be they prophets, be they men of the world. Their universal compassion radiated in all their thoughts, words and deeds.

Consider the greatest, most unique, most auspicious image of goodness in our history. Who is He? God born as man; Bhagavan Sri Krishna, *avatar* of Vishnu leaving his *jyoti* in his celestial abode and being born here as a child of man. His words, his teachings, which are like a flood of divine nectar, have struck

strong roots today—with even greater firmness than before—in the minds of the Hindus. They exert an immeasurable influence on their minds, guiding their conduct. The Primal Lord who overthrew despotic rulers, it is He who gives counsel to the greatest of kings and teaches them statecraft; He, the compassionate One, was brought up among cowherds. Since as a man he had to govern men, so as a child he tended cattle. He made the cows graze as they pleased on green pasture lands; made them drink good water; during summer days he stood beneath a tree, played on his flute, and drove away their fatigue; he danced according to all their whims and fancies before milking them and looked after them well. Sri Krishna, the great Aryan God, accepted a cowherd as his father. He grew up in that colony of cowherds. Children of cowherds were his playmates. Since Krishna accepted a cowherd as his father, hence in the songs that sing his praise, the phrase *Nandanandan* occurs. Often in later life, he looked back with lively joy on his sports as a youth. The doings of his younger days always remained fresh in his mind. Even when he attained a high status, he never forgot the playmates of his childhood, never forgot familiar faces. By his presence and his actions the village acquired a special beauty. He was always thoughtful of his childhood companions and of doing good to them.

This great saviour of mankind, the unequalled protector who overthrew all despots and liberated millions, he worked along with common folk, served and encouraged them, showed them the right path, and strengthened their hands. In order to become the

darling of the entire human race, he moved on intimate terms in the company of all men. He learnt about their deepest desires and shared their thoughts; he adopted their customs and manners; he weighed the expediency and feasibility of their ideas; and he then proceeded to rule the land guided by the principle that the king should act according to the wishes of his people. The story of Sri Krishna's childhood emphasises this noble principle.

—K.S.S.

India, August 7 and 14, 1909

(13)

MUSIC

Because the people of Tamil Nadu seem to possess ears of iron, they are content to hear for years on end the same repertoire of seven or eight songs. Where people have ears of skin[1], they would never stand this affliction.

It is not at all my case that we should forget the songs of the old Masters. But the singer should understand and keep in mind the meaning of the song he sings and should pronounce the words distinctly. The syllables should be articulated clearly, not swallowed, by the mouth. By repeatedly singing the few, same old songs, one should not make music an infliction...

Today's musicians should not hesitate to compose new songs, saying, "The old Masters had grace divine; we have not. What shall we do?" The Gods are not dead. Even now we can meditate on them and win their grace. One earns this grace divine by devotion, compassion for all living beings, straightforward conduct, truthfulness and incessant effort.

Let them not become despondent, saying, "There are no more kings and nobles to patronise music; when we are struggling for livelihood, how can we cultivate aesthetic taste? We have to master quickly a few songs

[1]There is a pun here in the original, with a second meaning—"where people are an undefeated nation".

and look out for some means of livelihood; what else could we do?"

Throughout the world now the time is past when the artiste looked for patronage to kings and nobles. They should now trust the common people. Henceforth all the arts will receive patronage and support from the common people. It is the duty of the artistes to create in them real good taste. Once this is done their patronage is assured. If a noble gives Rs. 100 a month, the people of a town will give Rs. 1,000 at the rate of 4 annas per head.

The public, the townspeople, are the real patron. They are the new monarch. If this monarch is trained a little and given some knowledge, the arts will not suffer at all. The nine *rasas* should all be developed and blended. Now in our country only two *rasas*, *karuna* or *soka* (pathos) and *sringara* (erotic) are prevalent; the others, *vira* (heroic), *roudra* (indignation), wonder, disgust, fear, humour and *santa* (peace) are not developed in our songs. When good songs are sung, they will command respect. And reward will follow.

—K.S.

Swadesamitran, May 1916

(14)

WEALTH

It looks as though the 'Socialist' party in Russia will almost achieve its objectives. The 'Socialist' party might be called the 'equality party' in Tamil, though that too may not be fully accurate. It is an important principle of the party that the differences between the rich and the poor due to the present order of distribution of wealth should be eliminated; that the world's property, namely, land, should be distributed equally and that the present system of competitive economy should be replaced by a new system of collective economy. Therefore, it seems appropriate to call this party the 'collective party'.

It is a matter for study why such a party has not taken root in India. The first reason is that differences between the havesand the have-nots in Hindu soc iety[1] are not as glaring as in Europe. Nor do we have in India the sharp hatred that exists between the rich and the poor in Europe. The rich of the country do not insult the poor as the rich of Europe do. We also have the tradition of giving alms to the poor; this tradition is not as prevalent in Europe as it is among us. . . . .

To ignore the poor will be dangerous. In the Old Testament of the Bible, Adam and Eve are said to

[1] In Bharati's time the phrase 'Hindu Society' had been used invariably to mean 'Indian Society.'

have begotten two sons: Cain and Abel. Cain hated his brother Abel and killed him. When God asked him where his brother was, Cain answered, "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Similarly, the rich divide among themselves the land, mankind's common property, leaving a large section of the people to starvation and death; and, if you ask them if they should not be saved, they reply, "They are poor because of their fate. Are we responsible for that? Are we the keepers of the poor?"

The world is changing. We must do our duty by the poor. In each village, the well-to-do must gather together and devise methods to eradicate the difficulties of the poor. The sorrows of the world can be removed by love. If we do not do this, but remain indifferent in our country too, as in Europe, the differences between the rich and the poor will worsen and society disintegrate and face great dangers.

If the wealthy ceaselessly labour in a spirit of love and equality, the world will be saved from the dangers of injustice. I pray to Parasakti to lead mankind to love and equality and give it all-round prosperity. . .

All men are afraid of death. But poverty is worse than death. Knowing this, the poor sometimes call on God to give them death in preference to their plight.

Why has poverty become the worst of afflictions? Let me tell you. Food is the foremost need of all living beings. As the Tamil poem says, at the first touch of hunger all the ten noble qualities, viz., character, pride, education, beauty, wisdom, charity, penance, persistence, enthusiasm and the love of honey-worded damsels, will vanish. Food is the basis of the pleasure and vanities

of this world. These do not exist where there is no food. Further, even to sustain life, one has to have food. No food, no life. Hence, poverty, which puts a large majority of the people in doubt about their day's meal and makes quite a number of them sure of their starvation, is dreaded worst by men.

In this respect, the lot of men is really more pitiable than that of animals and birds... A number of dogs or a number of pigs do not join together, as men do, and claim by documented right all food in a village, placing all others on short rations. In no group other than human beings does such a situation obtain as ensures food for a select few and denies it to a large majority of them. Even the crows eat in company!...

* * *

The campaign for ending the differences based on wealth is spreading around the world very fast. The campaign is at its intensest in Europe. The principle of making all natural wealth of a country the common property of all its citizens is called the Socialist principle. In other words, it is the collective principle. ...

But, I do not like this principle to be spread by violence and murder. It is my view that bloodshed and murder should be avoided whatever might be the impelling reasons. Therefore, if men who believe in the noble ideals of equality and fraternity take to the sword and the gun to advance their ideals, I must say their method is quite incompatible with their high ideals. There are many fundamental reasons for the success in Russia of the principle of compulsory expropriation and socialisation of land and wealth belonging to the capitalists. The unparalleled tyranny and

injustice of the rulers of Russia and the inhumanity of the rich aristocrats have led to several political revolutions there; this has made compulsory socialisation easy.

* * *

Even where the Socialists have the upper hand, I would say it will not be right to use violence to enforce their principle... "What shall we do? We have to use murder to do away with murderers; we have to adopt injustice to do away with the unjust," says Mr. Lenin. This is a totally wrong argument. Murder will only perpetuate murder, and will not put an end to it. Evil can be conquered only by good. It is the ignorant who believe that evil can be conquered by evil. *Adharma* can be conquered only by dharma; the bad can only be conquered by the good, murder and loot can only be conquered by love and compassion. This is the only solution that will last....

* * *

...First, Indian landlords and capitalists are not as cruel as those in Europe in their treatment of the poor. It will not be right forcibly to deprive them of their possessions. Even our poor people may not very much like this done. Therefore, we must discover and follow a way of appeasing the hunger of the poor without resort to murder and loot, without violence and bloodshed. It is neither compatible with the traditions of this country nor possible in its present conditions to forcibly deprive the rich of their possessions.

But it is obvious that we cannot tolerate for a moment a situation in which millions of people exist without an assurance of a full meal, and lakhs of people are left to die an ignoble death for lack of a mouthful of

gruel.

Therefore, if we can discover a solution which will rid the world, by peaceful means, of poverty, the worst of the ills of the world, we shall be doing great service not only to our own country but to the whole world.

Let us here discuss if such a peaceful solution is possible. I shall here explain the solution that strikes my mind for ridding the world of poverty without recourse to riots, war and bloodshed among people.

The world consists of countries; the countries consist of provinces; provinces consist of districts; districts consist of some cities and a large number of villages. Therefore, if we take a village and discover the cure for ridding it of poverty, then that cure could be adopted for ending poverty in the whole world. This is self-evident. Let us, for example, take this village of Kadayam where I now live. The fields around here belong to thirty big landlords and small landholders.

These landowners should all join together and establish an organisation or committee. The committee should meet before the local temple, and by beat of tomtom gather all the people of the village. Then, with the consent of all the landowners and as a representative of theirs, one of them should rise and make the following promise:

"Although you people get only gruel for food, you are not in a position to be sure of a regular supply of even that. Hence you are beset by endless worries, quarrels, envies, deceits, disappointments and riots which mow you down. This worry over food has become your major worry for which you see no end.

"The lands in this village have become the sole

property of a few of us, either through proper labour or —as the French philosopher Prudhomme said 'Possession is theft'—through improper means. It is not our fault that land belongs to us. But it is a fact that without your co-operation, help and friendship, these lands will be of no profit to us.

"All of you are beset by the worry of not being sure of your to-morrow's food. The difficulties and struggles that you face because of this situation affect us also. Although we are different from you in the matter of possession of wealth, in all other respects we are also human beings like you. It is essential for us to mingle with you and have dealings with you. Therefore, it is impossible for us to be happy when you are ground down by poverty. All our affairs have to be carried out with your help. We have no alternative but to depend on you. Your poverty burns us like a curse on all sides and makes us disunited. Only envy is growing among us, the rich.

"We appreciate the fact that land is like a mother, common to all, and that it is unjust for us to claim exclusive right over it. But it is not right, as it has happened in countries like Russia, for you to do away with us by murder or imprisonment and violently expropriate our property which has been handed over to us from generation to generation. For, ownership is an attribute of common civilisation, and it is not right under any circumstance to rob one of one's possessions.

"If it is conceded that you who are landless can rob us of our lands and take them forcibly from us, will it not be right for those without clothes to rob you of your clothes? And, the houseless can rob house-

owners and take over the houses. The man without possessions is such a rarity, that such a man is not found even among the wandering hill tribes.

"Also is land alone property? Houses, vessels, articles of use, mats, pillows—everything is property. Would you consider it right if hill tribesmen enter your village and by force deprive you of your houses and all things in them?

"Therefore, it is clear that it is not right for you to forcibly take away our lands from us. However, we do not want to continue to commit the sin of appropriating and sharing among ourselves the produce of land which Mother Earth provides for the use of all. We do not want to continue to say, 'You can have food only at our mercy. If we do not like you, you will have to face starvation,' and keep you in a state of bondage. As the sage Tiruvalluvar has said, you lead a pitiable life asking yourself ever again the question, 'Is indigence to bear me company even today? She tormented me but only yesterday even unto death.'

"We do not want any longer to continue the sin of keeping you in this tantalising state resulting from the problem of food. We have now decided to free you from the fear of hunger and propose to adopt the following method to achieve the objective.

"Let some of us and some of you join together and form a committee called Work Planning Association. This association will decide the quantum of work to be done in the village in such matters as agriculture, sanitation, education, temple affairs (or spiritual affairs), food, clothing, utensils, etc. This Association will decide who is competent to do what and allot work accord-

ingly. Everyone, man, woman, youth or child, will be assured of a square meal.

"We and our descendants shall abide by this agreement, generation to generation. We promise to this effect here in this temple, in the presence of God, on our honour and for the welfare of our own children. This agreement between us shall be cut on copper plate, signed by a leading representative of ours, and kept in the temple archives."

If such a vow is taken and village work is carried on on the basis of the vow, poverty will be ended in the village. More than that, the greater evil of the fear of poverty will vanish. Unity and mutual goodwill will be fostered; disease and untimely deaths will decrease; the village will radiate happiness. If this plan succeeds in one village, it will be followed with benefit by others all over the world.

My brethren of Tamil Nadu, let it be to your credit to show the way and lead the world towards the eradication of poverty in the universe.

—R.A. PADMANABHAN

Swadesamitran, November 1917

(15)

NATIONAL EDUCATION

Domestic Culture

Education in the family is at the root of all national education. It is the domestic habits which persist in the national life; whosoever is a gentleman at home makes for a gentleman in the country. Who is forbearing at homes is found to be tolerant among his fellows. He that dares steal his wife's belongings does not scruple to pilfer the property in a temple. The man that discriminates among his own children is unsuitable to administer justice in his town. The nation can never grow civilized so long as the family fails to develop its culture. There can be no liberation of the nation if there is no freedom at home.

* * *

There can be no doubt about its running counter to the very concept of nationalism if, in the name of national education, we do not let Tamil play a prominent role and employ English as medium for the teaching of many subjects and treat Tamil as the second language. That national language should hold the principal place (in the curriculum) is the very basis of national education. This should not be lost sight of. If we expect wholehearted support from Tamilnad to our efforts which we take with the object of developing our national language, then we should cry from the house-tops that

we are going to employ Tamil as the medium of all our work.

Just because I am a protagonist of Tamil Culture, I do not wish if to be taken that I set my face against the Aryan languages in support of the traitorous group which is masquerading as the Dravidian party under the leadership of Doctor Nair. May Tamil prosper in Tamilnad. May Sanskrit live as gloriously as ever throughout India. May Sanskrit learning grow ever more in strength so that our national integration may be accomplished to absolute satisfaction. Still may Tamil hold the loftiest place in Tamilnad and develop.

Primary School

Start a school in your village, or, if it is a village of large size, open as many schools as you can at the rate of a school for two or three houses. It is enough if you begin with three masters in a school. They should be paid a salary of Rs. 30/- per month per head. These teachers need not be graduates or M.A.'s. Matriculates will suffice. Failed Matriculates are preferable. These teachers should be proficient in our mother tongue. For example, those who undertake to work as such teachers should have a thorough grounding in at least *Thirukkural* and *Naaladiar* (two very old classics of Sangam Literature). It is desirable to select as teachers those who have patriotism, respect for their religion and kindness for all beings. If we cannot help appointing as teachers men who lack these qualities, the Headmaster should take steps to infuse in them these

virtues. It is advisable to appoint healthy and strong men as masters.

Syllabus

(a) Reading, writing and arithmetic.

(b) Easy lessons in history.

Vedic age, Puranic age, the age of Buddhism, the history of the Rajputs—these should be taught with special care and attention.

The history of the state or region in which is situated the village or town where the school is going to be established, should be taught with particular interest. (Here by state or region I do not mean the present state of Madras or Bombay, but I mean the linguistic areas such as Tamilnad, Andhra, Kerala and such other regions as are naturally divided). Steps should be taken to get the teacher to teach bright spots in the histories of these regions with pleasure, zest and interest. The impressions gathered in early years are alone likely to prove lasting. Therefore, it will be advantageous in reforming their nature and ennobling them if, right in the primary class, we impress on them the glories of our own ancient history, of Asoka, Vikramaditya, Rama, Lakshmana, Dharmaputra and Arjuna and their influence over their subjects.

It is needless to state that not only history but other subjects should be taught in the mother tongue. Will it not be altogether inappropriate to call that national education which is imparted through a medium other than the national language?

Apart from Indian history, if convenient, arrange-

ments should be made preferably to teach illustrations and stories from the histories of other lands as Arabia, Persia, Ireland, Poland, Russia, Egypt, England, France, America, Italy, Greece, Japan and Turkey.

(c) Geography:

As far as possible proper knowledge should be imparted in geography, astronomy, solar system, the stars and their movements. Maps of the world, the globes and colour pictures should be freely used. The pupils should be allowed to have clear notions of the five continents, the principal countries in them, population of the respective countries, religion, political condition, commerce natural produce, and industries. Detailed and clear information should be conveyed about principal ports and the trade carried on at these places. Children should be taught in what foreign countries our countrymen—the Indians—have settled for the most part, their education, occupation, status, etc. Moreover, children should receive proper education in regard to the growth of civilization in other countries of the world.

Geography of India, her states, natural divisions of the country according to the regional linguistic conditions—these should be taught with special care and attention...

Pupils should be informed about the magnificent architecture and temples of our country.

While teaching these, it should be impressed on the students when discussing the division of the population, that there are two principal communities (in India), namely, the Hindus and the Muslims and between them the best portion of the Muslims are the descendants of

the Hindus and besides these the descendants of the immigrants have also been assimilated in the indigenous population. While teaching geography, over and above giving illustrations of natural produce, it is better whenever it is possible to arrange excursions and instruct the children through observation. Names should be written in the mother tongue in the maps, globes, etc.

(d) Religious Study:

...While the teachers of national schools train their pupils to remain devoted to their particular deities, they should teach them to give up altogether the foolish practice of criticising or disliking other deities. "*Ekam Sat viprah bahudhā vadanti* (God is one, the seers address Him by many names)—this truth of the Rig-veda should be brought home deep into the minds of the students...All religious feuds are against scriptural injunctions and, therefore, a sign of extreme foolishness. But there exist no indissoluble bonds between religious principles and orthodoxy, which is liable to change with the changing times.

...They should be taught that serving the poor and uplift of the backward are the highest forms of social work.

(e) Politics:

....

(f) Economics:

....

(g) Science:

It is essential that students should be taught through instruments and experiments elementary science as learnt from European countries. Boys should be trained to conduct experiments by themselves.

Natural sciences should be taught using clear and easily understandable Tamil terms. Wherever possible Tamil words alone should be used to name substances... If Tamil words are not found, Sanskrit terms may be used. It will be appropriate to employ Tamil and Sanskrit not only in naming substances but for the purposes of conducting experiments and explaining the states of matter also. English terms may be availed of on occasions when suitable words cannot be found in these two languages. But English should never be used in describing the properties of matter, their actions or conditions. If no other recourse can be had you may use English to name the substance alone.

General Notes

It may not be expensive to conduct a national school along the lines shown above. It is enough if you spend one hundred rupees per month. Funds should be formed for this purpose by public subscriptions from among the villagers themselves. Rich persons may give liberal amounts and others may subscribe according to their means.

* * *

Caution: If students who are not Hindus are admitted in these schools, facilities should be given to impart to them religious instructions in their faiths, in a liberal way, and without prejudice against other religions.

Conclusion

National education is essential to national life and

national uplift. It is improper to call it a nation, where national education is not given. It is a grave inhabited by ghosts in human forms. This idea is approved by Rabindranath Tagore, Annie Besant, Justice Mani Iyer and other wise leaders and they make intensive efforts to spread national education. Therefore it is the foremost duty of our people to make efforts without slackening in the least in establishing national schools in every one of our villages all over our country, along the lines stated above.

—P.S. Varadaraja Ayyar

Swadesamitran, May 1920

(16)

THE WORDS OF CHRIST

A certain ruler came to Jesus and asked him saying, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

And Jesus said unto him, "Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and mother."

And he said, "All these have I kept from my youth up."

Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

And when he heard this he was very sorrowful; for he was very rich.

And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.

"For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Then Peter said, "Lo, we have left all and followed thee."

And he said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that has left house, or parents or brethren, or wife, or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God,

who shall not receive manifold more in the present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

These are the words of Christ. Addressing a meeting at Allahabad, Mr. Gandhi narrated the above parable and said, "The Westerners consider the acquisition of wealth as the main dharma. They had to suffer for holding this belief. But we should not think in terms of material wealth."

Mr. Gandhi further said, "It is only with this end in view that our forefathers set certain restrictions on acquisition of wealth. By this I don't mean that we should not have any material pursuits. We may have in our midst a body of people who follow the worship of Mammon but certainly this is not the best course.

"In the West, the progress and development of nations is judged in terms of Pounds, Shilling and Pence. They have as standard the material wealth of America.

"There all nations are envious of America. In our country some feel that we should acquire wealth like America but need not work like them. One cannot at one time be in the three stages of the best, the middling and the bad. The gods will not reside in a land full of smoke from the mills and the industrial machines. There can be no happiness born out of the modern machines and the wealth accruing from them."

Besides Christ, Mr. Gandhi also gave the examples of Prophet Mohammad, Guru Nanak, Kabir, Sri Chaitanya, Sankaracharya, Dayananda and Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and said that they all lived a life of poverty, attained greatness and gave the world enlightenment. But does it mean that Mr. Gandhi exalts the state of poverty? No. He says, "There should be

more Truth than gold; more courage than authority; and more generosity than selfishness. If we can only make our homes, palaces and temples consist less of pomp and richness and more of character, then we can, without a big army, stop the aggressors." This statement of Mr. Gandhi appeals to me. Those seekers of wealth at any cost, forgetful of God, look upon wealth as God. They are found in every country. They think that they are very clever. But it is just foolishness. I agree with Gandhiji, when he says, "Believe in God, speak the Truth. Be fearless. Whatever you feel is right, you should do it fearlessly." 'If you have the grace of God, all else will you get.' So says Gandhiji from the Bible. This too, he says, is like a word of the Vedas and should be followed up. But what Gandhiji prescribes is the path of renunciation. That suits some at some times but not all. In the present context it may do a lot of harm. I agree that acquiring wealth defying the words of God and forgetting Him is harmful. But we should at once here and now acquire wealth *with faith in God*. This is my view and, as far as I know, this is what the Rig Veda also says.

—M. SRINIVASAN

(17)

THE GLORY OF ISLAM[1]

Some years ago I happened to read a book by an English author, which dealt with the life of Prophet Mohammad. The book really thrilled me.

The priests had gathered in large numbers at Mecca. It was an annual gathering of priests from all parts of the country. Mohammad too belonged to the priestly clan. Like the low caste Hindus of today, the Arabs of those days were worshippers of multitudes of gods. Though one of the priestly clan, Mohammad rose up and addressed the conservative assembly thus:

"I have seen Allah direct and he has selected me as his chief representative. Henceforth you worship Him and worship Him alone. There is only one God and not many. There is no God other than the one God—La Ilaha il Allah. There is no God other than Allah. He is not made up of limbs like us. There is no use of worshipping Him in idols and offering your food as *naivedyā*. He is the creator of all beings. He is the sustainer. He activates life here. All are His bodies and all His endless forms. He is pure knowledge. He is the essence of grace. To set him up in the shrine of one's mind and to worship Him with the flowers of courage and devotion is the real worship. Be devoted

[1]The gist of an address by Bharati in an assembly of Muslims in Pottal Pudur (Tirunelveli District) on June 20, 1920.

to Him with unceasing and concentrated love. Such devotion is called 'Islam'. Those who take to Islam will attain the eternally blissful life of liberation. Come ye all to this religion of mine, give up your foolish rites and creeds and live a life dedicated to Allah."

Hearing this, the conservative priests and their followers loudly laughed and ridiculed him. But Mohammad's nephew Ali got up and said, "I believe in your teachings. There is no God other than Allah and Mohammad is the great Prophet. To this effect I make my solemn pledge."

Another significant conversion was that of Khadeeja Bibi, whom Mohammad served as a clerk for many years before marrying her. It is easy to declare to the outside world that one had direct vision of God and one was God's representative. But it is very different with your nearest relatives and neighbours, who live with you and have seen you in your most helpless condition —when you are ill and when you give way to tears and who know you intimately and put up with your weakness, your cowardice, fears, cruelty, jealousies and unrighteousness. And if they will accept you as truly great, as the recipient of divine grace, that is impossible unless you have really seen God. For no amount of artful deceit can convince this intimate circle of relatives and friends. It is for this the saying goes that 'no man can become a prophet in his native village'.

From the fact that Ali and then Khadeeja both accepted Mohammad as God's chief devotee, endowed with all divine grace and as one who came down to earth as God's representative, it will be clear that Mohammad drew around him many disciples. His

religion gained in strength and stature. This caused fear and jealousy in the minds of the old priests who were practising idolatry. And they persuaded the ruler of Mecca to arrest Mohammad and his chief disciples. This happened in 622 A.D. This reached the ears of the prophet and on the advice of friends he left with one of his disciples to Medina. When they were passing through a forest path, horsemen were sent after them by the ruler of Mecca. The pursuers gained in distance and Mohammad and his disciple could hear the galloping horses behind. They concealed themselves behind a bush. The disciple was shaking in all his limbs and whispered to his teacher that he could see no escape from the relentless horsemen and that they were sure to meet their end. Then Mohammad comforted him, saying:

"My friend, I am Allah's representative on earth. And none can harm me. I repeat, even if it be the combined forces of all the monarchs of the world, no harm will come to me, till my allotted duties on this earth are completed. A thousand thunders falling on my head will be powerless to kill. Allah is omnipotent. There is no power higher than His. So I fear none, and since you are with me, no harm will befall you too."

The horsemen went away without finding the two fugitives.

When I first read this wonderful account, Mohammad tremendously rose in my esteem. It is easy to be brave at normal times. But to display such great courage in the face of acute danger and to say earnestly that God would come to his aid and that he had nothing to fear, are signs of a great devotee. No other force

can face a bullet calmly excepting devotion to God. Only the recipient of divine grace can laugh at an infuriated cobra, without the least sign of fear.

Even after Mohammad reached Medina, the army from Mecca attacked him time and again. He had no trained soldiers, while the Mecca-force was a trained army. Despite this difficulty, Mohammad defeated them. He had the undaunted courage of the wise and implicit faith in God. It was hence that he was crowned with success in every attempt, every time and everywhere.

I often indulge in thoughts and mental pictures of Mohammad Nabi. There he is at the dead of night, in the lonely desert sands, all alone on a camel. Or again I picture him standing all alone on a rocky cliff. By his life-long devotion, his studies and hearing of scriptures, his matchless love and wisdom, his heart seeks Allah. He has no other thought. The glorious thought of Allah fills his whole being. There dawns the supreme light of wisdom. And Nabi has the vision of Allah. Mohammad experienced the same bliss that Suka Brahmam had. This experience of Suka has been sung in melting lines by Saint Tayumanavar.

The story goes that Suka Brahmam, while traversing a forest, was intensely thirsting for the vision of God and he cried out, 'Oh God, Oh God.' Then the rocks, the earth, the sands, the water, grass, plants, creepers, the flowers, the wind, all the beasts of the jungle, in short the entire creation, both animate and inanimate, responded saying, "What?, what?". The message of the story is that Suka Brahmam realised that God is pervading the entire universe.

Mohammad was a handsome man, of great courage, profound wisdom, full of devotion and he was fully aware of the ways of the world. Therefore, he was successful whether it be business or warfare. It was for this that he was loved.

And yet when he founded a new religion, his relatives and friends became unfriendly. But Nabi did not mind. He was a dedicated soul. To him his own riches, comforts, good living, name and fame and even his very life, were of no consequence before the welfare of the word, dharma, justice and Truth, which were Allah's cause.

It was because of this unswerving devotion to him, that Allah chose him as His beloved representative.

Mohammad was born at Mecca....He considered Jesus Christ as a great Nabi but refused to accept him as an incarnation of God. Even as the Jews and the Christians felt that it was not proper to worship God in the images, Mohammad probably felt that it would not be proper to call a mortal an incarnation of God, however learned and devoted one may be and even if one might have had the vision of God; such a man might at best be hailed as a great *bhakta* and *jivanmukta*.

My own ideas on this subject may be summed up thus:

"The universe exists in the three stages of time. It moves, it revolves as many a sphere; it rushes through as the wind; it agitates as the mind; with tremendous, unbelievably tremendous speeds, the seen and the unseen atoms are ever engaged in ceaseless action. We call the force that controls and moves all these as God. He

is everything. All actions are His.

What is His real nature or original form? Chaitanya or the pure knowledge is His true nature or form. The most ordinary actions of our lives are His actions. Yet, when once one perceives that this God pervades the entire universe, the actions of such an individual are regulated by direct divine commands. Such an enlightened one we call as Nabi or the prophet. And then, if Allah would reside in his heart, to his full awareness and using his intellect as a master would use his own property and converting his external actions too as guiding lights for humanity, done in a state of perfect consciousness, such a man can be truly called an incarnation."

However, Mohammad probably did not feel that Christ attained this stage.

Mohammad was the first Caliph of Islam. After him, Abu Bukkar occupied that exalted stage for five years. Then, Omar continued for seven years. After his time, Islam was divided into two sects—the Shiya and Sunni.

Koran is, to Islam, like the Vedas are to the Hindus. Mohammad does not claim that those are his words but declares that the words of God reached him through an angel and that he himself acted as a means to give that glorious message to the world.

—M.S.

(18)

THIS OCEAN, THE MIND[1]

July 1, 1915

I will overcome this ocean, the mind. I have long been trying, the gods know my struggles. Fear of death, fear of disease, weakening of *bhakti*, pride, selfishness, fatigue—the mind is filled with these. They have to be eradicated.

Chalo! There is God. It is all mind. In that ocean of the mind the 'I' is a drop. A pipe connects it to me. This pipe is clogged with the impurity called ego. By removing this ego I can attain power divine, *jnana* divine.

* * * *

Tobacco juice makes my head spin. Two million times have I taken a vow to stop tobacco. This is yet to succeed. See how habits hold you in shackles! Son, win over your habits through *Sakti*. . . .

There is pain in the stomach due to intense heat. Pray Sakti endlessly to grant you freedom from disease. Make up your mind that you have no disease. As the mind, so the body.

Son, conquer your body. At all times it should obey you, not you it. It is an animal, you are a *deva*. It is a machine, you are its owner.

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[1]In these random thoughts entered in his diary, Bharati subjects his mind to a close, hard scrutiny. Only a few excerpts are translated here.

July 2, 1915

Fear of disease. Laziness. This morning too has been ruined by them. S. came as usual. Parameswari, Mahasakti—I seek from you immortality. Liberate me from worries. Grant me the strength to think of you ever, to see the wonder of your world and feel happy, and to carry on my dharma, without a break.

It is my view that if one goes on recording the doings of this monkey, the mind, then in course of time one can bring it under control. Before we tame a creature we have to understand fully its nature. We cannot control what we do not understand.

Parasakti, give me the courage to write about the condition of my mind every moment, without falsehood, without deceit.

The thought that what we write might be read by others makes one shy to write about one's weaknesses. Parasakti, remove that shyness from my mind.

I am going to write about the movements of Bharati's mind. I am different from him. I am pure awareness. He is a petty creature bound by arrogance. I am going to control and set him right. He feels shy to write about his faults. Let your grace make me ignore that shyness.

Write. Write the praises of Parasakti. Hey, Bharati, there's no greater occupation on this earth. Hail Parasakti. She is the ground of all the world. The world manifests itself to us in three forms—matter, life, awareness. They coalesce into each other. Yogis have concluded that the world of awareness has several layers.

Life gives rise to matter and awareness gives rise to life, say yogis.

There is a being, a substance which is source material for all these, which has these for its limbs, which is itself these, which is the life of these. That is MAHASAKTI. Pray to That, and your problems will vanish. The mind which ceaselessly meditates on a great thing attains greatness.

The mind is a mirror. If it unceasingly meditates on Parasakti, then her image will appear on it. There is joy in this.

Have to write for the papers. Have to write letters. Laziness won't do. Have to reduce intake of *paan*. Should one worry about lack of money? Fool, fool, fool, aren't we pure awareness? We should merely watch, amusedly, worldly happenings. Does anything happen in this world according to the wishes of the mind bound in arrogance? All living beings defend their life, ceaselessly. Is it of any use? When your own life isn't in your possession, what is the use of worrying about other things? The world moves as Parasakti ordains. Seek from her the joys that you desire. Receive whatever she provides, and be happy.

Be industrious, always work hard. There is joy in hard work. Minor devils like poverty and pain run away when they see hard work.

Udyoginam purushasimhamupaiti Lakshmeeh

If you keep on praying to Parasakti, all your sorrows will vanish. Body and life will attain a glow and last not less than a hundred years. This is true. You will certainly live for a hundred years. Nature has ordained so. By living according to nature, by avoiding foolish

worries, one can certainly live for a hundred years. Son, banish fear.

For how many *yugas* have you—Parasakti—been preserving earth, wind, and sea in the same form! Parasakti, please bless my implements, my efforts, with your presence and protect me (for ever) similarly.

Joy exists, does it not?

Parasakti, you are the self of this world. Don't you have a mind? Can't you hear? Day in and day out I sing your praises. Could you not grant me the boons I ask for?

First, I should gain control over myself. The child had fever. By your grace it is cured now. For two months, day and night, myself and Chellammal were in great agony. We could neither eat nor sleep—both of us. Always misgivings, fear, fear, fear! Sakti, we depended entirely on you. You saved us at last. Blessings on you.

Added to this the nuisance of creditors. No money to pay for the doctor. Tension, tension, endless tension! How many days! How many months! How many years!

Parasakti, won't you grant that I keep on writing poetry? So that I may settle all my debts, so that my family and others dependent on me may lead a trouble-free life? I wish to sing your praises in thousands of songs ever new. Grant me that I may sing a song which in depth of meaning and splendour is unparalleled in the world.

O Mother—if creditors keep on pestering me, if I am all the time worried about rice and salt—how can I sing of you?...

—K.S.S.

JNANA-RATHAM

A few instalments of **Jnana-Ratham,** *the first story attempted by Bharati, appeared in "India" weekly. Bharati added three more chapters later and had it published in book form in January 1910 from Pondicherry.*

Considered as a masterpiece in Tamil prose writing, it is a narrative of the Poet's fancied journey in the 'Chariot of Knowledge' (as distinct from day-dreaming astride the wild horse of imagination).

Only excerpts are reproduced here from the translation done decades ago by the late Prof. P. Mahadevan.

(19)

JNANA-RATHAM

OVERTURE

It was evening. I was resting on the *payal* of a house in Veeraraghava Mudali street, Triplicane, facing east. A delightful sea-breeze blew from the sea through the windows and filled the front room in which I was resting. The mingling of that breeze with the late evening sunlight produced upon me a lucidity and a joy which I cannot describe. 'How nice,' I thought it would be, 'if one could go for a sea bath just now, and then ride at ease in a horse-carriage promenading the entire stretch of the Marina, communing with the soulful strains of Kalidasa's *Sakuntalam* or pondering over the sutras of some Upanishad or other, and so to Adayar and back!' A pretty fancy, but how utterly beyond a poor man who found it hard enough to make both ends meet. Horse-carriage indeed! I derided myself for my foolish thought.

'Alas,' I reflected, 'how depressing is this poverty! It may prevent one from the enjoyment of enervating luxuries; but it is no less a foe to the enjoyment of legitimate pleasures as well.' Then my *alterego*, my better mind, prodded me saying: 'Fool, why repine at an imaginary privation, while God has enriched you with the priceless gift of a soaring imagination?

Is it not of divine origin and infinite range? Can it not take you wheresoever you wish to go, and delight your mind with visions of surpassing loveliness? Instead of using this gift, why grovel on earth complaining of earthly wants?'

Forthwith, I bade my servant, Resolve, to make ready my chariot of *jnana*.

Quick as thought, the chariot appeared before my mind's eye. It was comely enough as chariots go, but was by no means the most perfect of its kind, for it had limitations derived from my nature and being. But it served my turn. In what follows, I shall set down faithfully all the places I visited, the people with whom I conversed and the experiences that befell me.

UPASANTI LOKAM

(The Land Free from Care)

* * * *

I bade Jnanaratham to transport me to a world free from all care. But the mind put in a caveat saying: 'It is not such a pleasant place as you imagine. A land free from care might be free from joy as well. Moreover, methinks there are other weighty considerations which I cannot specify at the moment. They dissuade me from undertaking this journey.'

At this I became impatient and exclaimed: 'Fie, weakminded, craven-hearted creature! How foolish you are when you obstruct my well-meant efforts to give you relief from the worries of this world and make you enjoy for a time at least the tranquilising joys of

that other world.' But my persuasions had no immediate effect. I have an infatuation for this enchantress, my mind. This is not the occasion to relate how my infatuation for it arose. But in course of time the sense of my separateness from it began to wear thin; and I became lost in a bemused slavery to it. I longed to free it from its agonies, sorrows and tribulations, and so thought of lifting it into that world of peace and joy. Imagine, therefore, my consternation at its refusal to profit by my offer. The more I tried to persuade it to avail itself of the opportunity, the more it withdrew and opposed my suggestion. At last in desperation, I addressed it saying: 'O my mind, in this matter I shall ignore your wishes or aversions. I shall help you in spite of yourself.' And turning to the chariot, I urged it to proceed on its journey without further delay.

And lo, the next instant I alighted safe in Upasanti Lokam.

The chariot came to a stop in front of the fortress surrounded by a high and massive wall; though the battlements of it were visible from a great distance, I expected that the gates would open automatically to enable me to enter it with ease. But the gates did not open. This amazed me, as I did think it possible for any place to be impervious to the entry of the human mind. Could there be such an impregnable or pure place, I wondered. As for the mind, it began to shudder a thousand times more than before. It was dumb struck. At the threshold of the fort, a sentry stood with a sword in hand. The sword was of a flaming red colour and seemed of such strength and

sharpness as to shiver the Himalayas themselves into fragments with a single stroke of it. But it bore on its blade the legend 'Viveka' in letters that dazzled the eyes. He turned to me and asked: 'Halt, who goes there?'

I bowed respectfully to him and said: 'I have come to have a peep into the World of Peace and then go back to my abode on earth.' He laughed at my words as if he found them funny.

I was nettled and so asked him: 'Why do you laugh?' But for answer he redoubled his laughter.

My mind, ever timid by nature, was completely nonplussed by such a development. Mortified and vexed, I rejoined: 'Friend, won't you tell me in a word if I may go in or not? Please stop your laughter and answer me.'

Thereupon he replied: 'You and the Upasanti Lokam are as poles apart.' And then added more gently: 'Excuse me, don't get angry. I laughed because you seem to think that the Upasanti Lokam is a kind of theatre where you could witness some tamasha and then go back home. Generally speaking, those who come to this world never go back from it. They come to stay!' he replied.

'That is all right,' I said, 'May I go in or not?'

'By all means go in; you are welcome. All living creatures can claim this as their motherland. I have no authority to prevent anyone from going in. But your mind which has not yet mastered itself nor learnt the secret of "*vairagya*, i.e., disinterest, freedom from attachment", is apt to be burnt to ashes if it should go near the regions of fire.'

I recalled how, at the very outset, the mind had shown no disposition to enter the Upasanti Lokam and now stood quaking with fear like a tyrant before the Almighty Dharma Devata, and understood its objections at last as springing from its own unworthiness. I felt profound pity for it, and because of my love for it, I gave up my longing to explore this new world without it. I, therefore, turned to the guard and asked him : 'Please advise me what I should do now.'

'Deluded mortal, know that there can be no peace unless the mind's egoism is first killed off. The mind is the prolific breeding ground of thoughts which are worse than demons. I see that you are still in thrall to that evil enchantress. When you are ripe you can come here of your own accord, freely and without fear. But for the present, retire.'

The next moment I was engulfed in a darkness which blotted out the fortress, the sentry on duty and everything else. I again opened my eyes, and found myself back in my humble quarters in Veeraraghava Mudali Street, reclining on my cot, and felt the breeze from the beach fanning my body.

GANDHARVA LOKAM

(World of Joy)

[The next day at the bidding of the mind the poet goes in his Jnanaratham to the Gandharva Lokam, a world full of unadulterated joy. There he meets a lass of breathtaking beauty.]

...Why not try and describe that maid whose

charm made me nearly faint at the first sight?

Moonbeam-emitting face. Thereupon a chic crown, three-finger high, made of flowers. Two dark eyes, deep wells of wine, wherein the soul-bee falls and loses wings and reels. Teeth, lips—Nay, not for chewing, but worthy to be chewed.

Marvellous figure unmarred by her milky wings. Arms that can send thrilling currents into him who touches. On earth they speak of women of heavenly beauty. What to say of this charm and form? Divine form, divine charm?[1]...

'What's your name?' I asked the Gandharva girl.

'Don't be irrelevant, do as you're told: What do you want my name for?'

'But please, won't you tell me, unless it's forbidden?'

'Well, then I'm called Parvata Kumari—Kumari for short, if you please!'

'Thank you, may I call you by your name?'

'Of course, you may.'

* * *

Presently I asked her, 'Where are we going? To your house?'

'There is no such thing as mine and thine in this blessed land. This is the land of heart's desire. Just as the fullness of knowledge leads to the realisation of the One-ness of all the Universe, even so is there no consciousness of difference or separativeness in full enjoyment. Both are states of Advaita. Everybody owns and enjoys everything here. As for you, know

[1]This and the preceding two paragraphs are translations by La. Su. Rengarajan, as late Prof. P. Mahadevan's original translation thereof is not available.

that I am leading you to the Fragrant Palace by the seashore.'

'I marvel at your philosophy and expert distinction between the one and the many, sameness and difference; where did you study Vedanta?'

'To those who have savoured enjoyments at their most intense and know the happiness thereof, Vedanta comes most naturally, for it is indeed the crown of such experience. The man who talks of Advaita without having enjoyed happiness is a fraud. On earth there is a lot of such bogus Vedanta. With us however in this world, we grasp the seen and unseen with equal facility. Not far from here is situated the Upasanti Lokam. Know you not that the God of Supreme Enjoyment and the God of Supreme Yoga are one and the same—that Vishnu and Siva are but two aspects of the same Reality? However, this is unseasonable time for a discourse on Philosophy or Metaphysics. Look below you.' We were flying up...

'Come, let's go to the waterfalls for a bath,' said the adored maiden who had appeared as my guide in that world. We soon went to the spot. The waterfall came down from a good height in two laps tumbling into pools, and then gushing out in foamy flakes down to the ground. Poets have compared the sight to sunset and many other sights in Nature. I however feel that such comparisons are inadequate. The heavens, the sea and the *Ramayana* are, according to our ancients, fit only to be compared to themselves—they are so unique: even so I consider a waterfall as an incomparable marvel of Nature. Others had preceded us and were enjoying their bath in wonderfully playful

ways. Recalling what I saw from my present mundane memories of that vision, I am seized by an inhibition which prevents me from describing faithfully what I saw. On earth, there are those who are pure and blameless in speech or writing; but in thought and deed?

Clothed in Nature

The falling waters flowed in a multitude of streams and rivulets on all sides, skirting round mounds or leaping over crags. Lovely youthful couples circled over the waterfall perched on the rocks, plunged into the waters and then flew up again, and again indulging in the exhilarating sport. To the pure all thoughts are also pure, even as the evil-minded think only of unclean thoughts. In the land of the Gandharvas, evil in thought, word or deed being unknown, there was no affectation, false modesty or pruriency, and their naked, unclothed condition seemed as natural to them as our clothes are to us. How can one describe such a ravishing scene... !

Truth and Beauty

Having disported ourselves in the springs long enough, we next proceeded to a near-by temple where we found many pious devotees offering their worship with flowers to their guardian spirits. The dwellers in Gandharva Lokam, though gifted painters, sculptors and artists, have built some temples in which there are no statuary or sculpture at all. On the crests of such

buildings, the symbol 'OM' is blazoned as in a lighted torch. Only in temples intended for congregational worship or group entertainment were found specimens of sculpture of marvellous workmanship and finish. The former were intended for private, individual communion and for mental or spiritual tranquillity to be cultivated through mental concentration. 'There is a close relationship between *bhoga* and *yoga*; for, from Gandharva Lokam is but a step to the Santi Lokam,' said Parvata Kumari, and I began to glimpse, bit by bit, the truth of that statement. He who is athirst for beauty invariably finds his longing for truth also gratified. For it was a sage who declared: 'Truth is Beauty, Beauty Truth.'

Favourite Deity

As I followed Parvata Kumari into one of these temples, I asked her: 'Parvata Kumari, tell me who is your favourite deity whom you are going to worship now?.'

'My favourite is Madana, the God of Love; my mind shall dwell upon him. You may likewise think of and worship your favourite God,' she replied.

'You are my favourite Goddess, and I would worship you alone,' I told her.

'Well and good,' she cried gaily. Presently she added: 'Friend, your God is whatever is acceptable to you. God assumes the shape through which you seek to worship him. For what is God? It is the manifested shape, it is the unsullied thought, it is the ultimate Truth. it is Beauty.'

How Our Ideal Saves Us

How true! For in the world of men, when we say that the ideal man is Rama, Rama becomes the God of our search. We forget our petty limitations and, lost in the flood of ecstasy, come nearer to our idea. I felt convinced that if I chose Parvata Kumari for my ideal, she would become the means of my salvation and deliverance. When, as in the legend of Kalidasa, he became infatuated with a courtesan, did he not find supreme vision through her liberating him from that thraldom? So there is a profound truth in such single-minded devotion to an ideal.

Parvata Kumari chose a quiet spot inside the temple and adopting the pose of a *yogini* went into a trance in which the heavens themselves seemed to be reflected in her eyes as she began repeating in fervid accents the mantra: 'Om Namo Brahmane!' Facing her, I too decided to concentrate on my favourite deity, and adopting a like pose and bending my faculties to a single purpose began repeating: 'Om Namo Kumaryai!' Soon I too was lost in the ecstatic contemplation of my Goddess in my inner vision.

Goddess Becomes Human

Presently she concluded her devotions and gave me a signal to get up. Out we flew in the air drinking our fill of the lucent rays of the morning sun and reached the temple of art. But alas, I cannot describe it adequately. 'Come,' I said, 'we spent yesterday seeing the sights of nature; today we shall study the works of art. This

morning we saw the waterfalls. What wonderful skies we have here; look where in the distance the top of a hill seems to kiss the skies themselves, how lovely! But I forget the glories of your artistic treasures. Come.' Parvata Kumari laughed mischievously, provocatively. I was emboldened to say: 'Kumari, if you smile at me like that, I shall not deem you my favourite deity; instead, I shall kiss you, so beware!'

Snatches a Kiss!

At this she redoubled her laughter, whereupon I promptly carried out my threat. For a second she looked at me with angry eyes. I explained a little timidly: 'I warned you in advance; and when you laughed again, it seemed almost as if you asked for it.'

'You don't understand: the reason for my anger is something different. In our world, devoted youths kiss their beloved maidens not on the cheeks, but on ' She faltered. I was not slow to take the hint, and rectified the omission by punishing the wondrous culprit with a kiss on her lips.

* * *

One morning, I found myself alone and fell into a reverie. 'How strange that even in this land of unmixed happiness, my mind is not fully happy or at ease! Joys abound here no doubt; but the repeated and mechanical experiences of them do not seem to pall on the natives. How can they be at once free from longing and fully satisfied? Is this the defect or glory of mankind that we alone seem condemned to be ever dissatisfied or frustrated?'

Just then Parvata Kumari sailed in from the blue

and sat by my side. As usual, she read my thoughts like a book, and spoke to me as follows out of the fullness of her superior knowledge:

'Friend, I see that you are amazed at the monotony of our existence here. Was it any different from or better than this with you, dwellers on earth? Death overtakes them on earth whether at eighteen or at eighty. The food that you eat in your childhood you also eat in your second-childhood, and yet with what gusto and novelty do we not take that food day after day? Note besides how the wretches in your world are prepared to lie, cheat and betray others for the sake of securing for themselves food, shelter and clothing. Why, they are even prepared to sell themselves or kill others to gain their petty objects! If the poor are contemptible in these shameful ways, the rich exploit others shamelessly. You pity the former and cannot but hate the latter. But note this, how all of them keep on doing the same things over and over again!

'In our World there is no fraud, falseshood or pretension or hypocrisy. Nor do we suffer from the evil consequences of such vices. And we know no death. However, I do not blame you for feeling dissatisfied with yourself even amidst all these glories of this land. For, in one respect your lot is superior to ours. For, you are blessed with the immortal cravings of the indestructible soul; its characteristic is a divine discontent with things as they are, which is the hallmark of idealism. Amidst the ceaseless flux of things, your consistency and devotion to a far-off goal is unshaken and irresistible. This may not be true of the majority of your kind on earth, but it is the mark of the choice

minority among you. The Gods have to take on a human shape if they are to feel the exhilaration of freedom. Only earth can boast of such rare souls as Buddha, Sukha, Janaka, Krishna and Jesus and others. Such men cannot be born amidst us in this land. Bound by the shackles of a golden *maya*, we cannot feel discontented with our lot. You see life in the raw and so feel easily roused against its cruelties and stupidities.—I mean the best of you.

'You may well feel surprise that I, a woman, fit perhaps only to be fondled and kissed, should talk such high philosophy to you, expounding the mystery of renunciation or sannyasa. Know that we in this world are blessed with minds which are clear and sparkling like water; but we find it hard to practise what we know or can preach. The human state is necessary for that experience.'

What amazed me about her was not the versatile eloquence but her reversion to simple womanly charm and grace at the end of it all. There was a look of candid innocence in her eyes which gazed on me like those of a deer in a hermitage.

'You minx,' I muttered. 'Let the old forfeit be ordered', begged she eagerly.

'You are not my beloved, but an old rishi masquerading like a girl', I said.

'All is one,' she replied, 'go to.'

Nevertheless I caught her in my arms and hung on her lips in an access of self-forgetful rapture for some endless seconds.

SATYA LOKAM

The following day I left for Satya Lokam. There I beheld the land bathed in a flood of light more glorious than that of the Sun and spreading its rays which were purer. But, strange to say, there was no Sun in the heavens. In the centre of that world I however saw a wondrous figure seated. It was from the face of that figure that the rays of light kept issuing. They reached up to the heavens in endless and pellucid waves.

* * * *

I was not interested in examining the rays of light that lighted that world. I was eager to go close to the celestial figure seated in the middle of that world. A voice from the air fell on my ears, saying: 'Behold the central figure to be Brahman; that is the very authentic form of Truth itself. No one can hope to reach it easily or at once. Guided by one ray of light emanating from it, and moving ever so slowly like atomies, be content to hasten slowly. A single forward jump will wreck your chariot beyond repair. So be warned!'

Truth Many-Coloured though One

Being naturally of an indolent nature, the idea of pursuing any of the infinite rays of the light that flowed round me in all directions did not appeal to me. 'Well then,' I thought, 'let me defer further consideration of the mysteries of Brahman. I would rather go round and see this new world of Truth,' and accordingly

directed my chariot on an aerial survey of the region.

After proceeding a little distance, I beheld an orb of light which was coloured differently. The air seemed full of this new colour; but even more strange to tell, as I continued my journey, the colours changed imperceptibly and delighted me with their differences beyond imagination. As I was pondering on what this phenomenon could mean, I realised the mystery underlying them. It was that though Truth was one and indivisible, it had a way of manifesting itself with endless differences.

At last I arrived at the entrance to the northern gates of the new world. From there, I beheld the divine form of Brahman face to face. I was however eager to be assured if it was the same face that I had seen earlier on arriving at the world of Satya. It was then that I became aware of a further marvel associated with it. Its brightness increased with the increased concentration with which I beheld it. Soon my eyes became weary with the blindness of intense gazing, and I turned away for relief.

What the Voice Said

A voice from the circumambient air again spoke up distinctly saying: 'Mortal, know that Truth would appear simple enough at the beginning. But the more you study it or concentrate on it, the more confusing it becomes. But undeterred by such inconvenience if you should persist in following the course of even a single ray, there would be relief for your mind and your eyes at the same time. At last, Truth would mani-

fest itself to you as clear and precise as an object which you can hold in your hand.'

It was then I became eager to follow the trail of one of the many rays that branched away from the figure of Brahman; but again my indolence proved too strong for my desire. 'Alas,' I cried, 'cursed be my sluggishness and inertia. It has always been my deadly foe; for even in the course of my life on earth, it was this fatal flaw that prevented my efforts to achieve wealth and fame. Now, though I thank my stars that I am free from such petty ambitions, I feel how laziness has not yet left me even in the world of Truth.'

Activity Is the Law of Life

But my repinings and tears were of no avail. We cannot escape from the results of our deeds, for we reap as we sow. The Universe which is under the sway of Dharma Devata ensures that justice is meted out to all, correct to the smallest scruple, no one getting more or less than he strictly deserves. Having permitted my love of ease to get the better of me, I now find it not so easy to get rid of. The good things of the earthly existence may not be permanent or inspiring; but even the achievement of them has been prevented by this slackness of my nature. I therefore deserve to be punished for it. Renunciation to be sincere or enduring must come after achievement; that is not true renunciation which is the result of impotence or incompetence. Poets have ever admired those of heroic stuff who have been the architects of their fate. It is the fool who, not realising the value of wealth, hoards

or hides it, that is justly worthy of condemnation. It is irrelevant in this context to go into the question of whether the man who has wealth puts it to good or bad uses. That is a different matter which has to be considered separately. The mark of the wise man is that he is able to size up the limitations of wealth, and turns away from it after proving his mettle in the acquisition of it. Sages and poets have ever condemned the man who has become a slave of wealth in the course of his attempts to amass it.

'Yes, indeed, laziness is the unpardonable sin, the lazy man is fit for nothing but contempt. The Universe is bent to our will by perseverance and dogged determination. Inertia is the gateway to our moral and spiritual death; it is the handmaid of the Goddess of All Misery, misfortune and penury, her children are the myrmidons of death itself.'

Thus I pondered for a time, and then shook myself up with a new determination. 'I must get over this stupefaction of mind and sluggishness of limbs, I must not allow my thoughts to become diffused, divided and dejected. Down with this laziness, and may I dedicate myself to the pursuit of Truth for the rest of my life!'

Longing for Gandharva Lokam

As if in answer to this new resolve of mine, my mind replied: 'How happy I was in the Gandharva Lokam! Why do I not feel so here? How foolish of me to have become satiated with it so soon! Come, let us go back to that untrammelled world of joy filled with music, dance,

the glories of sky, nature and art, of ravishing scenes, unfading flowers, lovely women. What has this world of rays to give us to equal those precious gifts?'. Again my mind on hearing this advice wavered for a moment. But the kindly fates so ordained, doubtless because of my own meritorious past, that a new determination and courage seized me.

The Mind Is a Good Servant but Bad Master

'I have found you out at last, my deceptive mind! You are the insidious foe of my enduring happiness, the plausible guide to my miseries. Behold I shall destroy you this very moment'—and I raised my hand as if to choke it to death. The mind cried out in a panic like one about to be murdered. Then the voice again spoke up and said: 'Foolish mortal, desist from a fruitless attempt, for the mind indestructible. You are not yet ripe for parting company with it. Till then it will be ever with you. Further, have you forgot how you started on your present quest merely for diversion? How can you hope to discover Truth in such a frame of mind? Give up the foolish thought that you can repeat here the pleasant experiences of Gandharva Lokam. Know that you have been more fortunate than many others whose chariots have been driven out from here ignominiously. You are at least allowed to stay on because of some saving grace in you.

'Know further that no one can reach this world who has not traversed slowly or painfully all the previous worlds of existence, namely, those of Bhu, Bhuva, Sva, Maha, Jana and Tapa. Being a gifted poet, you

have been exempted from the earlier courses. Proceed from here to the world of dharma and profit by what you see there. Then you will better appreciate the significance of your experiences of the Satya Lokam which have now confused or distracted you. The mind will obey you and guide you throughout the world of dharma. Return here again thereafter, and many things which now baffle your understanding would then become plain to you.'

I felt myself in a whirl, and became unconscious for a brief space. When I opened my eyes again, I was surprised to find myself in my lodgings in Triplicane, address as already notified at the beginning! Beside me were a few newspapers, my pen and pan-supari all as usual—my invariable companions.

THE MUNDANE WORLD

I had a splitting headache. Getting out of bed, I went eastwards crossing two or three lanes until I came to a tenement in a god-forsaken street where I had rented a portion. May I describe it for the reader's delectation as a foil to the glories of the Gandharva world already unfolded to him? Let me pause a while and ponder over the amenities which this terrestrial World offers us!

In the fore-part of the house in which I lodged, there was a small square from which branch out rooms on two or three sides. The house itself faced west. To the south of the square was a small open courtyard which was flanked by rooms on opposite sides. Another small landing adjacent to it led up to the first floor

in which there were two rooms. Between these two halves of the building there lay behind and in common to both in the southern backyard a well as well as a water-tap. In that back portion I lived with my wife, children, my aunt, my younger sister-in-law and brother. In the front portion lived a Madhva-Raoji, the landlord with a much bigger family. He sweated his days out in some office in the postal department. His body was plastered over with the marks of his faith in sandal paste. Their number tallied with the number of his progeny. His wife was again *enceinte*. He also reared a cow which was tethered to the front courtyard inside the house. He had of course his own quota of dependent relations hanging on to him.

I had the advantage of rooms of the first floor since they gave me the benefit of some fresh breeze now and then. The Raoji crowd had not even that benefit. The terrors of the mosquitoes which began with the dark were indescribable. I rarely ever slept. The good Raoji suffered from asthma, and so kept up his coughing with spasmodic regularity. His children would be caterwauling also by turns. The pregnant and distracted mistress of the house would wake up fitfully and, cursing her children or perhaps God Almighty or may be Raoji himself in Kannada language, would relapse into sleep.

If such was the Iliad of the Raoji's woes, my own budget of them was even more variegated.

That reminds me. I've lost the thread of my narrative. Wasn't I returning from Veeraraghava Mudali Street? On the way, I had to negotiate many dangerous and noxious spots; to wit, the plying of jutkas,

the coaches of the more opulent, the dust that was kicked up in the streets, the noise and confusion, the stench of the drains, and the establishment of the Raoji in the front portion where lay the risk of treading underfoot one or the other of the numerous children of that worthy man.

Safe from these perils, I arrived at last at the security and silence of my upstair room. It was a multi-purpose spot where I worked and slept and held court with my cronies and transacted a thousand other items of business. I called out to my wife to come up, and when she responded with the languid query, 'Well?', I replied: 'Can't bear this headache; get me a pepper plaster.' 'I see it is the same chronic infliction on me to drudge for you. Whether you suffer from headache really or not, I suffer from it figuratively. By the by, the milk woman has been dunning for her dues; the Raoji's wife has hinted that the house-rent is over-due; it appears that the Raoji sent word to you even yesterday. May I also remind you of your promise to give me money enough to buy a bracelet for the child? As for me, countless have been your broken promises.'

She eked out this formidable list with other etceteras which on being totalled up mentally indicated that nothing less than a sum of three lakh rupees would answer to our present commitments. Finally came her coup *de grace*. 'Every street loafer gets the benefit of your largess; but you frown at me when I mention the barest needs of the family. At this rate what would be in store for us at last? Pauperdom, pure and simple,' she concluded with that lugubrious benediction.

'Wonderful, I've got rid of my headache; thank you

very much. You may now go down!' I told her, in my most sympathetic and genial tone.

'Yes,' she flared up again, 'it is indeed tiresome to talk to one's wife. But if it were any Tom, Dick or Harry, how you will hold forth until you get hoarse in the throat!' It was her idea of placating or humouring me.

* * * *

Heavens, what a world is this! 'Of the earth earthy'! Fraud, chicanery, endless care and worry. No virtue or pith or marrow in it all. Like moths eating into the inside of a bamboo pole. Everyone blames his neighbour for his failings, each thinks that if only he had a free hand, things could be shaped much better and quicker! Saying that others are undependable, he himself proves a cheat! All mankind is subject to one irredeemable ill—the love of money!

It is the most potent of all the devils, and it works havoc with the aid of hireling 'desire' employed by it. Senseless, immoderate, inordinate desire! For the privilege of combining desire with taste, and of enjoying both in due harmony and proportion, commend me to the Gandharvas. Awareness is the tool of the Satya Lokam...

Besides these, there are other aspects of mundane life and thought upon which I desired to paint and expatiate at length. But then it struck me that to deal with the ways of an unprofitable world at any length is itself an unprofitable proceeding; and so shall desist from such an enterprise!

DHARMA LOKAM

Some days later, I got into my mind's chariot and wended my way to Dharma Lokam. I thought that I could range in this world free and unconfined as I did in the Gandharva Lokam. But as I was about to alight from my chariot in the new world, a young man of singular appearance accosted me. He had a handsome, unclouded face, soft and wide-seeing eyes, a dark but luxuriant and curled beard; he had on his right hand a bundle of cadjan leaves. 'Stay where you are, and do not get down; instead I shall get in with you and shall show you the lions of this place. Such are the orders of the Dharma Devata!...My role in this world is to act as a guide to new-comers.'...

The guide leads the Poet into a dense forest and introduces him to a sage, Kanvacharya, who smilingly agrees to answer the Poet's questions on Brahmana dharma.

Let me record a few sample questions and answers here for the benefit of the reader.

'Is a Brahmin only born, or can he acquire Brahminhood by his efforts?'

'At birth, all men are partakers of mere animality. By training and exertion, they develop their qualities multifariously under the stress of the actions they engage in. The Lord has said in the *Gita*: "I have divided mankind into four classes on the basis of their qualities and functions." '

'Is this rule operative in life now?'

'Yes; my father was a Kshatriya. I am a Brahmin. Of my twelve sons, I have selected only one to undergo

the training of a Brahmin. The rest of them have chosen their training in accordance with their aptitudes and inclinations and have become members of all the other varnas.'

'On earth, this system of Varnashrama Dharma obtains only in Bharata Varsha, and it is not in accordance with what you have stated just now!'

'It's wrong to imagine that Varnashrama is found only in India; it is of universal validity. But unfortunately, it is in Bharata Varsha alone that the Dharma has become perverted and misapplied. In ancient times, Varnashrama in India was as I have described it. In proof of this, look into the entire body of ancient Hindu literature, from the Vedas through the Upanishads to the *Itihasas* and the Puranas. What the Lord laid down in the *Gita* is actually being demonstrated in all other countries of the world now. The present fallen conditions of Bharata Land—its poverty, ignorance, disease and servitude—is due to its betrayal of its ancient Dharma.'

'Please teach me the dharma of the Brahmin class.'

'Very good, but I shall make it brief. The Brahmin class is the custodian and trustee of the community's knowledge and wisdom. You may call them Farmers of Culture. Their duty is to master the lore of the ages in all subjects according to their abilities and impart it to others according to their powers of grasp and assimilation. They should not vend their knowledge, but must give it freely. It is the duty of the beneficiaries to keep the teachers free from want and hunger. More is not expected by them and should not be given. May I remind you what Sage Yajnavalkya

said long ago? "He who studies to store paddy for the morrow's need is disqualified from becoming a Brahmin."

'All the ills of mind spring from ignorance; it therefore becomes the duty of the Brahmin to abolish this ignorance in men by his labours. This is the high task assigned to the Brahmin. If the toiling and working classes should forget their chief duty or prove unfaithful to it, then it becomes the responsibility of the Brahmin to lead them back to a realisation of their lapses, so that they could resume their legitimate avocations. If the dharma of Vysias should suffer eclipse, then the duty of the Brahmin would be to rehabilitate them in like manner by teaching them all about their special dharma. On the other hand, the duties of the Brahmin and Kshatriya should never suffer any decline. For it is they that support the rest. If they fail, then society itself is destroyed.'

The sage continued: 'In times of grave national crisis, we should not isolate ourselves from others in the name of our swadharma. All must do the work nearest to their hand, and not justify inaction by appealing to text-book maxims. When the house is on fire, all have to bend their energies in putting out the fire, each to the measure of his or her capacity. In the Kali Yuga, caste or colour distinctions have no validity, but are a delusion and a snare.

'You wished to know about Bharata Varsha. It is still in the era of Kali. In a few generations, Kali's time would be up; and the world's great age will begin anew. Krita Yuga will come round again. Then you will find here the true distinctions betweeen the different castes. The present artificial and unnatural

distinctions would then go.

'In the metaphysical view, only he will be deemed a Brahmin who knows that everything is absolute or Brahman. This great truth is beautifully brought out in the Upanishad entitled 'Vajrasoochika'. A wide and thorough knowledge of the classics, ability to expound the truths contained in them, guiding and helping the different functions of society to be properly discharged by those trained for them, complete detachment from the lures of the worldly life—these in brief are the distinguishing characteristics of the Brahmin; they comprehend the whole duty of the Brahmins.'

His discourse thus concluded, the teacher suddenly got up and went out of the hut. He returned and informed us that it was time for the performance of vespers. All the three of us then moved out to the outskirts of the village, beyond a cluster of trees to where a small stream was flowing. The blaze of the setting Sun was half lost in the clouds of the western horizon. The clouds appeared as if they were on fire in little islets across the sky. Nature appeared in one of her daily transfigurations of amazing beauty. We finished our bath; the other two took their seats at a distance from each other and plunged in the contemplation of Brahman. As for myself I seized upon the mystic syllable to commune with the spirit of *shanti* (peace).

Prayers finished, we returned to the dwelling of Kanva Rishi. My guide and I then wished to say a few words of thanks to the teacher before we bade farewell to him. But Kanva Muni replied: 'It's nightfall, and I beg of you both to spend the night with me as my guests in my dwelling.'

I then recalled the words which he had earlier uttered to the effect that he who 'stored food for the morrow would not be deemed a Brahmin', and so presumed that Kanva must be poor and resourceless. I therefore excused myself with a view to saving our host from embarrassment, saying: 'It's all right, permit us to go; thank you for your invitation though.'

The wise one read my thoughts like a book. 'Brother', he replied, 'know that where dharma is, no poverty can be found. Do not worry about it, but stay on for the night. ...

'Ignorance is a more invincible foe than even iniquity or unrighteousness. The latter is comparatively easier. All the ailments and disabilities which people suffer physically can be overcome by the labours of workers and merchants, for between them they provide the creature-comforts of life. The Kshatriya protects dharma, while knowledge is cherished by the Brahmin. The ideal Brahmin needs infinite heroism, must equip himself with inexhaustible and unfading light, strength of mind and determined purpose. The cohorts of ignorance are as legion; its springs eternal. Its roots go to the supporting heads of Adisesha himself. To vanquish these ghosts, to dry up its springs, to cut that tree at its deepest roots are no ordinary tasks.

'Note that in the mighty struggle of the Mahabharata, Krishna had a harder job to do than Arjuna, and Vyasa had an assignment as onerous as that of Lord Krishna.'

The next morning, the Muni-guide and the Poet proceed to the dwelling of a Kshatriya (warrior) named Satyaraman.

'May I know what is the basic virtue of the Ksha-

triya—that which serves as the matrix of all his other virtues?', I asked him.

At this, the eyes of the host sparkled with a new light, and seemed as though about to give the answer in revealing glances. I was seized by an anticipatory thrill. I drank his wisdom with all my faculties stretched to their utmost in reverential concentration, like that of the disciple at the feet of his master.

'Friend, you want to know the parent of all martial virtues? —the *fons et origo* Kshatriya effort and endeavour? Know it in brief to be 'war'; it is as the breath of his nostrils; it is his life-principle. The moment he gives it up, he becomes a craven. Thereafter he is a piece of wood, a corpse, a falsehood unworthy of even opprobrious epithets. Know, friend, that I am not fit to initiate you into the mysteries of Vedanta. Learn from our friend here, the sage, how *adharma* or unrighteousness first arose and grew. I may however tell you one thing. *Adharma* ever stands before us. Why, do you think? Because it cries to be killed by us, to be split in twain by the axe of dharma which we wield in our hands.

'Inequities have an unending blood-progeny. They grow the more they are destroyed. Therefore it is that the duty of a Kshatriya is to be ever engaged in destroying them. Behold how the Sun kills darkness every day. Know that Surya is the first, primordial Kshatriya of the universe. We are his progeny.

'So you see how the dharma of the Kshatriya consists in the eradication of all unrighteousness. It follows therefore that our duty to equip ourselves for this task becomes self-evident.'

'What', I wondered somewhat confused, 'was the point of destroying that which seems indestructible?' Hesitantly, I put the question to Satyaraman, and swiftly he replied: 'A typically ignorant question! Know you not that man cannot exist even for a moment without partaking of some action or other? You have to do it willy-nilly. That being granted, which would you prefer, to do it consciously, purposefully like the Sun, or blindly, passively like the straw that eddies in the flood? What elaborate care do we not give to this dirty body of ours, cleaning it endlessly? Do you consider it futile or superfluous? Have you ever decided to stop bathing, because of its repetitive or inconclusive character? If you are so particular to cherish the easily perishable body, how much more eager should you be to cherish the immortal soul?

'Know besides that *adharma* is the stuff on which dharma feeds and thrives. So it is that dharma will flourish only as *adharma* flourishes. When *adharma* loses its occupation, dharma will also languish and die.'

I had not the privilege of dwelling long enough in Dharma Lokam. The Muni took me to many other spots in it after our encounter with Satyaraman. The fault was mine. For, just as a man suffers from indigestion after having eaten some undesirable food, and suffers from the effects of it, so too my mind was troubled and rendered ill at ease by some thoughts which were not in consonance with the atmosphere of Dharma Lokam.

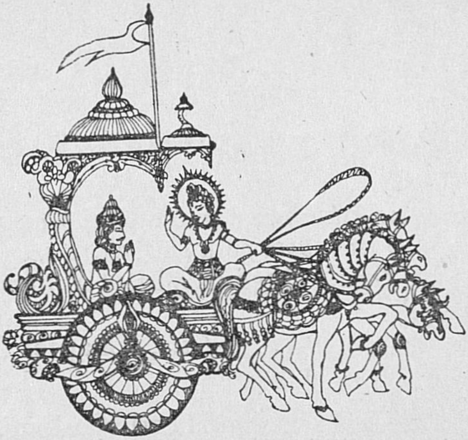
Some days later, I found myself alone, the sage having gone elsewhere on some other business. The effect of preordained karma! For my mind slyly

sneaked into thoughts of Parvata Kumari, for I saw her winsome figure standing before my mind's eye. 'Alas,' I exclaimed to myself with a sigh, 'what heavenly times I then had in her company!' Methought that the seductive figure of that maiden came closer to me. Instinctively I went forward to embrace it in my arms. I pressed her close and sought her lips in a delirium of intoxication. Suddenly I heard the crash as if of a world or two colliding and falling. Panic seized me and I fell down unconscious...

When I opened my eyes again, I beheld my old Triplicane quarters with some friends standing round me fanning me and trying to look sympathetic. 'What's the matter?' I asked somewhat bewildered. 'Why, you cried out in your sleep as if you had seen all the ghosts? We saw you huddled and unconscious. We gave you first aid, and have just brought you round,' they replied.

'Alas!' I cried sadly, 'even death would have been preferable, but I have now let go dharma!'

—P. Mahadevan



PREFACE TO THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Bharati, who was well-versed in Sanskrit, translated the **Bhagavad Gita** *into Tamil around 1912. In the preface to it he explained his strong world-affirming approach to the* **Gita.** *The preface was separately published as a booklet after the life-time of the poet.*

(20)

A PREFACE TO THE BHAGAVAD GITA

> *"One who is established in* buddhi *becomes, here and now, free from both good and evil. Hence, follow the path of Yoga. Yoga is efficient performance of one's work."*
>
> —*Gita*, Chapter II, sloka 50

This is the whole basis of Lord Krishna's teachings in the *Gita*. Being fixed in *buddhi* means keeping the mind pnre and unsullied. *Buddhi* is clarity of mind, freedom from anxieties and the sinful thoughts which give birth to these anxieties, when the mind is in its right, natural state.

Jesus too meant the same mental state when he said: "Unless ye become as children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

Being like children doesn't mean forgetting all one's adult experiences, or forgetting all that one has learned from books. It doesn't mean becoming a suckling again. It merely means that one's heart should be as pure as that of a child.

The mind cannot become pure unless the heart is pure. Lord Krishna says: "Retain the mind in its pure state. When this is done, all your deeds become good deeds. You can do whatever you want, forgetting distinctions of good and evil; your actions will always result in something good, for your mind is pure now. One whose mind is pure can never do evil."

Now, instead of interpreting the sloka thus, it would

be sheer folly to assume that Lord Krishna told Arjuna to renounce all action, good and evil, and go to sleep.

For later, in chapter three, Krishna says: "No one can be in a state of non-action even for a moment. All living beings, involuntarily and according to the laws of nature, are chained forever to the performance of different acts."

So, work we must, there is no respite from work for anyone. Even Kumbhakarna did not sleep forever; he was awake six months in a year. But while attending to your work, do not be weighed down forever by the attendant problems or obstacles, do not let these dishearten you. Lord Krishna says: "O Arjuna! You have only the right to action; you have no right over the fruits of your action."

So the Lord says: "He who performs his tasks in a detached manner is not worried about the result; he is the true *sannyasi*, the true *yogi*."

Never lose purity of mind, and work unceasingly. Whatever you do, then it will be for good. Even when you are sitting quietly, your mind will be doing good on its own. 'Work' does not mean bodily work alone. Mental work too is work. Is not meditation work? Is not reading work? Is not reflection work? The Shastras, poems, plays, laws, the Vedas, the Puranas, stories, the *Kavyas*, they are all works, are they not? And they are all creations of the mind, not the body.

Keep the mind pure.

Further on, Krishna says: "Perform Yoga. Yoga is—attaining Perfection in all actions."

Making oneself worthy of one's allotted work is yoga.

Yoga is *samatva* or equality in being. *Samatvam*

yoga uchyate. That is, immersing your mind completely in the thing before you, without confusion, without weariness, without fear, the mind becoming one with that which is before it.

When you relate to a thing, your mind should assume entirely the shape of that thing. Only then can you know that thing fully.

"*Yogasthah kuru karmani*," says the Lord. "Do your tasks as a *yogin*."

A yogi can expand his mind and make it like that of God himself. For he understands clearly how to concentrate attention. So his mind shines with a divine largeness; it has no limits.

And he is able to see God everywhere.

The *Gita* elucidates what is already contained in the Vedas. *Purusha Sukta* in Rig Veda says: "All this is God." This same idea is expressed by Krishna in the *Gita* when he says: "He who sees *atman* in all things, and all things in *atman*, he truly sees."

You too are God; all your actions are actions of God. Your being born in bondage is also an act of God. Your binding yourself with more and more fetters is also an act of God. Your attaining *mukti* is also an act of God.

'If all actions be God's actions, why then should I make an effort to shake off my bonds? Why should I strive for *mukti*?'—If someone were to ask this question, then we, in turn, would ask him: 'What is *mukti*?'

Mukti is freedom from all sorrows, fears and worries. If you want to achieve that state, make the requisite efforts for it. If not, go on wallowing forever in misery. Who stops you? But always keep in mind that none of

your actions is really yours. They are all God's. This knowledge will do you good, according to the Shastras. '*Sarvam Vishnu mayam jagat*' says Sanatana Dharma. The Universe is all made up of God. All appearances, all shapes, all forms, all scenes, all beauties, all situations, all life, all objects, all forces, all events, all action—everything is God (Hence equal to one another). *Isaavaasyopanishad* says: *Isaavaasyam idam sarvam yatkincha jagatyaam jagat.*' That is, 'Whatever occurs in this universe is pervaded by the Divine Being.'

Krishna expresses the same idea in the *Gita* when he says: 'The God which permeates the whole world is eternal.' Hence when God permeates everywhere, when all actions are God's actions, is it not sheer ignorance to nurse worries, fears, sorrows?

If everything is the doing of Siva, why should I worry? 'Is Siva dead who on my forehead wrote my fate?'

The stars revolve because of God's power. His wheel governs the three worlds. You are He. Your mind, the thoughts in your mind, everything is He. *Sarvam Vishnu mayam jagat.* So, O Man, why do you keep carrying responsibilities? Put them down and be doing whatever you can do. Why do you bother? Did you create the world? And when you think of the world, do not count it as something separate from you. The world, which includes you, which created you and is nurturing you—did you create this world? Are you in charge of it? Do the stars obey you? Were you born out of your own will? Why, then, do you feel responsible for each and everything?

God says: 'Many who, free from greed, fear and

anger, purified through the penance of *jnana*, are pervaded by me and take refuge in me, have attained my state of Being'. (*Gita*, iv. 10). This *sloka* indicates how one can attain *mukti* here on this earth, how one can become like God. 'Follow the path of *jnana*', Krishna says. 'Make it a discipline, a penance. Banish fear. Banish desire. Take refuge in me, merge in me. You will then gain my nature!'

Again, in the tenth sloka of Chapter v, Krishna says: 'He who, surrendering all actions to God, acts without attachment, is never touched by sin—as the lotus leaf by water.'

Isn't this excellent news for you, O men? God has shown you here the way to avoid sin. If thinking all the time of God you do action with the clear conviction that it is done by Him and on His behalf, then no sin ever attaches itself to your mind; it rolls off, like drops of water rolling off a lotus leaf.

'Man has no actions of his own, nor has he any godgiven ability for action. Nor has he access to the fruits of his action. Everything occurs according to the laws of nature' (*Gita*, v. 14).

Hence let him suffer from no confusion or envy in whatever he does. Let him not be in conflict with other lives, thinking that they are obstructing his actions.

'A brahmin of learning and culture, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a *chandala*—all are equal in the eyes of a sage,' says Krishna (*Gita*, v. 18).

Hence, Krishna says that a *jnani* not only rises above differences of caste and intellect, but sees no differences at all between the various forms of life.

Are not all beings pervaded by God? Is it not

Vishnu who fills all forms of life? *Sarvamidam Brahma.* The snake is *Narayana*; the mongoose too is *Narayana.* The brahmin is an embodiment of God, and so is the pariah. This being so, to consider any one form of life as inferior to any other form betrays ignorance. Those who nurse such feelings of inferiority and superiority will never at any time be free from sorrow. Wherever such feelings of difference exist, there is fear, danger, death. Freedom from all such differences is *jnana.* That is the pathway to *mukti.*

There are many who regard the *Bhagavad Gita* as a mere dharma Shastra. That is, they think its aim is to make a man perform his work well. But this is not a correct view. It is mainly a *moksha* Shastra. Its primary purpose is to show the man the way to freedom from all suffering. Work is inescapable, yet many argued that doing work was an obstacle in the path of *moksha.* It is with a view to enlightening these people that Krishna in the *Gita*—in Chapter III in particular and in all the chapters in general—teaches again and again, 'do work; do work; do not abandon work; do work.' From this, many people concluded that it was a treatise on 'work'.

What is important here is not the stress on doing work, but in what manner, with what mental attitude, it should be done.

Do your work without attachment; be detached, detached, detached; this is the paramount lesson. Work is after all something you have got to do in any case. Hence, the main aim of *Gita* is not to repeat it again and again. Don't get involved in the fetters of work, don't get into difficulties because of these, don't get

bound by these,—this is the important message. Free yourself of all attachment, do not let fatigue, worries, tension, fear and, worst of all, doubt, take hold of you. *Samsayatma vinasyati.* He who doubts perishes, says Krishna.

'The gates of the hell which destroys the soul are of three kinds: *kama*, *krodha* and *lobha*.' Of these, worries and fear have to be got rid of completely. The *Gita* teaches this repeatedly in about a hundred slokas. The means for this is faith in God. Unless one triumphantly installs God in one's heart, the heart would forever be gnawed by worries and fears, it would forever be tormented by anger and desire. And these will certainly destroy man.

We should hold firmly in our heart the faith expressed by Nammalwar in *Tiruvaaymozhi* when he says: 'Glory, glory, glory. Gone is the curse of existence; gone is hell; Death has nothing to do here now; *kali* will fall, you shall see.' *Bhakti* is the way to this. *Bhakti* is the strong belief that 'God will never forsake us'.

"Not for the world, O heart of mine,
But for your good I say—no lie, this;
Have faith that God who governs all
will guard us.
Say this and end all sorrow."

This assurance Krishna gives: 'Listen. I shall tell you again the greatest of all secrets, my ultimate word. Since you are dear to me, I tell you for your good.

'Make your mind mine. Be my *bhakta* (devotee). Serve me. Worship me. You shall then attain my

Being. This is true; I give you my word. You are dear to me.' (*Gita*, XVIII. 64, 65)

Then in sloka 66:

'Renounce all dharmas and take refuge at my feet. I will free you from all sin; grieve not.'

As a man fallen into a river lifts up both his hands, so too must all who are struggling in this sea of *samsara* lift up both their hands (that is, renounce all responsibility, realising that everything is God's responsibility) and surrender at God's feet—so taught Sri Ramanujacharya.

This same truth is taught in the story of Prahlada and in Draupadi's disrobing episode in the *Mahabharata*. Only after Draupadi raised from her waist her left hand too — which had been holding on to her dress—and lifted up both hands together above her head—only then, through the grace of Krishna, did her apparel start growing endlessly, her modesty was safeguarded and Dussasana fell down exhausted...

Appar[1] too describes the nature of this supreme *bhakti* when he says, "Even when I am tied to a pillar of stone and thrown into the sea, my sole sufficient help is the mantra of *Namah-Sivaya*."

Now, if happiness and sorrow are to be regarded as one, then why have faith in God? Why expect Him to dispel our fears and protect us?

Since the *Gita* says that whatever happens, good or bad, life or death, is an act of God and all such happenings are to be considered equal, why do we need God's help?

If someone were to tie us to a stone pillar and throw

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[1]Saivite poet-saint, also called Tiru-navuk-karasar

us into the sea, then—some people may well argue—'Would not the appropriate thing to do according to the *Gita* be to consider this an act of God, drown and die? Why should we call out *Namah-Sivaya — Namah-Sivaya* and try to protect ourselves?' This is a fallacious argument. I shall explain how. If we accept equally the good and evil accruing to us as a result of past karma, avoid fickleness of mind and trust in God, then He subjects us to some hard trials. If we do not lose heart even then and retain our faith in God, then God himself comes and dwells within us. Thereafter we encounter no suffering. No danger comes near us. No death comes near. All doubts, worries and sorrows leave us of their own accord. We attain life divine here on this earth, and experience eternal joy—*nityaa-nanda*.

Moreover, when Krishna says that a *jnani* considers all things equal, it doesn't mean that he—the *jnani*—should disregard all norms of human life and become a madcap.

Slaying a child and performing worship of Siva—both acts are the same in the eyes of God, for He is embodied in all movements, all actions. Even so, Krishna does not deny that according to human law killing a child is sinful and performing Siva puja is a meritorious act. Man wants to be rid of all misery and to enjoy bliss eternal. *Gita* shows the means. We should bear all suffering with courage and devotion to God. At the same time, we should never knowingly cause suffering or loss to others. We should always be doing good to the world. We should cherish every human life as we do our own. Even after we have re-

nounced all worldly desires and are immersed in eternal bliss, we should be still engaged in doing good deeds so as to set an example to others. This is what Krishna teaches in the *Gita*.

Further, the teaching that good and evil should be regarded as equal merely means that when misery overwhelms us, even then we should bear it calmly; it doesn't mean that one should reach an inert state like a clod and see no difference between making love and suffering from tuberculosis. For, as long as one retains common sense it is impossible not to differentiate between the two. It is wrong to assume that when one attains *atma jnana*, one loses common sense. When an ordinary man is struck by tuberculosis, he may lose heart, imagine the disease to be mighty and himself puny, may fall more and more into the clutches of the disease, label himself as a tuberculosis victim and prepare to die. But a *jnani* will never do so. If a *jnani* due to previous karma is struck by this disease, he would have faith in God as his only saviour, and would burn away the disease by the fire of his *jnana*.

Jnanagni sarva karmani bhasmasat kurute—The fire of jnana reduces to ashes all actions. One should have an abiding faith in God. God is all around us as the world. He is also ourselves. He would cause us no suffering, internally or externally. Why? Because we have *surrendered* ourselves to him within and without.

Not an atom stirs without Him. He will do us no harm. He is incapable of doing any harm. Why? Because we have reposed our full faith in Him.

'Those with faith in God will never be forsaken.' This is *bhakti*.

What is the nature of this God? He is the embodiment of all awareness, all movement, all being, all forms. He abides as everything.

What then should those with faith in Him do? Never feel sorrow, never know worry, never doubt.

> *'O son of Kunti! Contacts with nature give rise to cold, heat, pleasure, pain; they come and go and are impermanent; bear them patiently, O Bharata'* (*Gita*, II. 14).

> *"That man of courage who is unaffected by pleasure or pain, who regards them as equal—he attains the state of immortality"* (*Gita*, II. 15).

This is the pinnacle of the *Gita*.

Life immortal: living on this earth like Markandeya; this is the essence of the *Gita*.

Immortality: this is the secret of the Vedas.

It is because they show this path that the Vedas are held in such reverence.

Dead *jivan muktas* can only be regarded as having lapsed from the state they had attained. Only those who live on this earth as *nityajivi* or eternal beings are *nitya jivan muktas*. God says in the above two slokas that it is possible to attain such a state in this world. He also explains how. Experiences in nature which give rise to cold and heat, pleasure and pain, are by God's grace transitory, impermanent. Hence isn't it folly to melt at heart or suffer heartbreaks over these? Hence let no one grieve on account of these. He who has thus learnt not to grieve is fit to achieve immortality. This is Sri Krishna's creed. This is the essence of his teaching, this is the message of the *Gita*. Hence, the

Bhagavad Gita is *amrita* Shastra.

'*Amrita* Shastra'—that is, the Shastra which teaches the path to immortality. Yet there are some who imagine it to be an exhortation to kill. Since all these eighteen chapters were spoken by Krishna merely for inducing Arjuna to fight and kill Duryodhana and others, some say that the *Gita* is a work whose sole aim is "inducement to kill". These fools do not pause to consider why the *Gita* should talk so much about Vedanta, about *satva guna*, about banishing sorrow, or about immortality if its sole aim was to order killing.

Duryodhana and others are but *kama*, *krodha* (lust, anger) and so on; Arjuna is *jivatma*; Krishna is *paramatma*; those who do not grasp this secret can never understand the *Gita*.

This work came to be written mainly for the benefit of *kshatriya* kings. No doubt, the *Gita* enunciates pathways to freedom which are universally applicable. Yet, this work belongs especially to the *kshatriya* kings and was being widely read by them; just as the Vedas, though common to the whole world, yet belong especially to the brahmins.

Further, the *Gita* was narrated by a king; and the listener too was a king.

Hence, in order that the *kshatriya* kings may find it interesting, it opens with a battlefield prologue, in a dramatic manner. This structure accords it as high a place among great poems, as among *jnana* Shastras.

But those who, on this account, deny its value altogether as a *jnana* Shastra have obviously not proceeded beyond the prologue.

"Why only in the introduction? Even inside, every now and then, the refrain '*tasmat yudhyasva Bharata*' ('Hence fight, Bharata!') keeps recurring", some may object. This is the reason why I explained above the basic secret of the *Gita*. I shall repeat it again.

Duryodhana and others represent desire, anger, inertia, ignorance, forgetfulness, worry, sorrow, doubt and other sinful thoughts. Arjuna is *jivatma*. Sri Krishna is *paramatma*.

If you ask me how I learnt this secret, let me tell you.

Arjuna says to Krishna:

"You are Vayu; you are Yama; Agni; Varuna; the Moon; you are the father of all and the great great grandfather. (*Gita*, XI. 39)

Krishna says: "Again, O mighty-armed, listen to my supreme word. You are dear to me and I tell you this for your highest good." (*Gita*, X. 1).

"I am the great Lord of all the worlds. I have no birth; no beginning; he who knows me thus is, among mortals, undeluded and free from all sins" (*Gita*, X. 3).

Hence, both persons in the *Gita*—the speaker and the listener—stress that Sri Krishna is *paramatma*.

Once Sri Krishna is seen as *paramatma*, then it is easy for anyone who is trained in the Shastras and is familiar with *kavyas* to infer that Arjuna is *jivatma* and Duryodhana and others are *kama*, *krodha* and so on.

Only the ignorant will interpret the *Gita*'s teaching to mean the slaying of Duryodhana and other persons.

These fools forget that the *Gita* ranks among the three authoritative treasures of Hindu dharma, the other

two being Upanishads and Vedanta *Sutras*. Neither are they aware that the founders of our three most famous philosophical schools—Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva—have all written commentaries on the *Gita* and established it as one of the foundation stones of Hindu dharma. Where is Sankaracharya, a "Bhagavatpada"? Where is killing? Can the twain ever meet?

The main aim of the *Gita* is to show the way to attain the empire of *moksha*, here on this earth, and so remain steeped in incomparable bliss. Hence it is karma Shastra; it is *bhakti* Shastra; it is yoga Shastra; *jnana* Shastra; it is *moksha* Shastra; it is *amaratva* Shastra (the Shastra of Immortality).

For one who wishes thus to attain *moksha*, the chief enemy—the sole enemy—is one's own mind. 'He who has no control over himself is his own enemy', says God.

One has no greater friend than oneself, and one has no greater enemy than oneself. When one is one's own friend, the whole world becomes one's friend. Conversely, when one has no control over oneself and is one's own enemy, the whole world becomes one's enemy. The real enemy is within, not outside, oneself. It is the enemy within that appears as enemy without. If one removes the inner foe, the outer foe will disappear of his own accord.

All that exists without is to be worshipped as God. Only the enemy within—*ajnana* or the feeling of difference—is to be destroyed.

When we shed our feelings of separateness, of difference, and realise that all actions that take place around us are God's actions and all appearances are manifestations of God, then fear is destroyed.

In reply to Hiranya's question, "Where is this God called Hari?", Prahlada replied that "He is in the pillar, He is in the grass, He is everywhere."

'Isn't it absurd that one's own mind should become one's enemy? If everything is God, then is not my mind too God? Why regard it an enemy?' The answer is:

When one conquers oneself, and does good to oneself, one's mind is Divine and worthy of reverence; at other times it is one's enemy.

If all is God, isn't the mind engaged in evil also God? Would not the general principle that all actions are God's actions apply here? Well, the principle is sound enough, but our worldly experience is an undeniable authority for us. It is our actual experience that the mind does harm to us. It is quite possible to overcome it and make it do good instead.

Innumerable shastras and vedas have come into being solely for this purpose. When we witness the mind causing harm and countless lives being lost in consequence before our very eyes, nothing is gained by denying altogether (this proneness of the mind to go wrong and the possibility of directing it aright).

That the mind by its nature and owing to bad company does cause misery to the soul is quite clear. It is the common experience of yogis that through good company and proper training it is possible to make the mind an ally.

That all actions are God's actions is a general truth; the Truth Supreme. Yet man does have sufferings. That all are manifestations of God is *parama satya.* Yet we do see with our eyes the suffering of human beings.

That is to say, all things are the same for God. If millions of lives are lost it makes no difference to Him. Far corners of this Universe fly apart. Whole countries are wiped out by earthquakes.

Suns collide with each other and disintegrate into particles. And these reappear in ever new forms in millions.

Millions? One million? Million million? Million million million? Sextillion? Duodecillion? No. Infinite, beyond all counting. Yes, countless beings born every moment. And countless beings perish every moment. It is all the same for God. Movement is the manner of His being. It is the nature of this world, His body, to keep revolving. Yet, He has no movement, no death.

God is everywhere. He is ever present, He is everything. Yet we see that individual lives have pleasure and pain. True it is that through *ajnana* living beings bring misery on themselves. True also that in reality they have no evil and no suffering.

But this *ajnana* is an evil, is it not? Has it not to be removed? Controlling and overcoming the mind simply means removing *ajnana*, nothing else.

'But is not *ajnana* also God? Why destroy it?' If someone were to ask thus, then our reply would be:

'When you realize that all is God—*jnana* is God; *ajnana* too is God—when you realize this, then you have attained true *jnana*, you have shed your *ajnana*. It is true that *ajnana* and the consequent suffering are all God's doings; but don't forget that the removal of *ajnana* and your attaining *jnana* and bliss are also God's doings. And don't grieve over the exit of *ajnana*.'

How does one worship God? Krishna says, "I am

the Father of all. All movement originates from me. The wise who know this worship me." (*Gita*, x. 8).

Anyone who causes harm to a living being cannot be a true *bhakta*. Anyone who has enmity towards another living being cannot be a true devotee of God. Anyone who hates another living being is not fit to be called a true lover of God. Those who eat meat are not true servants of God. Even those who kill bugs and lice are really torturing God.

'*Ahimsa paramo dharmah*': Non-violence is one of the fundamental tenets of Hindu dharma. The *bhakti* of one who fails to fulfil the vow of non-violence would not take him to immortality. God will not forgive one who takes another's life. Nature will avenge defeat by death.

One should live in accordance with the laws of nature. No harm will come to us then. Hence common sense, as the English would put it, is the supreme wisdom, *parama jnana*.

The way of common sense is the easiest path. Being common, this wisdom is available to everyone. Yet, people fight shy of following common sense. *Kama*, *krodha* and the like prevent people from following the path of common sense. The clear doctrine of common sense is, 'Love others so that they might love you.' Love begets love. Affection begets affection.

It is but natural to wish that others should love you more than you love them. This tendency should be changed at once. This would lead to death.

We should love all other living beings. This would enhance life. That is, the life force within us would grow strong; if we expect others to shower

affection on us while at the same time causing harm to others through thought and deed, that is, if we keep disliking others and cursing others,—we would doubtless be destroyed.

There are some others who regard the *Bhagavad Gita* as a treatise on sannyasa or renunciation. That is, they think it is intended for those who have renounced their wife and children, shaved their head and roam about as mendicants. There can be no greater misunderstanding. Neither the speaker of the *Gita* nor the one who listened to it was a *sannyasi*. Both were kings, both were family men. 'How can you say so now? Did you not say earlier that Arjuna was *jivatma* and Krishna was *paramatma*?'—You may ask. Well. Let it pass.

Paramatma and *jivatma*, too, are caught up in worldly affairs. The Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, in a song addressed to God, says: "O Master, you yourself are caught up in family ties; how foolish of me, then, to seek deliverance from this?" *Samsara*—involvement in the world—is God's involvement. All actions are Siva's actions. 'Not an atom moves without Him,' says the old Tamil adage.

Krishna says in the *Gita*: " O Arjuna! There is no work for me to do in all the three worlds; there is nothing unattained and that might be attained. Still I continue to do work." (*Gita* III. 22)

Because, says God, "if I remained still without doing work, all beings on earth would follow my example. That would be the end of this world, and I would become the cause of this. Hence to prevent it I am working all the time. (*Gita*, III. 23)

God is performing work ceaselessly. He keeps creating universes, preserving them, destroying them. Can a lazy God do all this? God is the best of karma yogis. He has ordained ceaseless work for the *jivatma* too; he has ordained home and children, kinsmen and neighbours. Simply because someone forsakes the company of men and retires to the forest he doesn't get rid of his living environment. In the forest he is surrounded by countless animals, birds, reptiles, and trees, plants, creepers. He who imagines that dealing with animals would be less troublesome and would demand less care than dealing with human beings, is making a mistake. Howsoever bad human beings may be, howsoever foolish, yet it is surely better to live among them than with tigers, bears, wolves and jackals. It is true that there may be men in this world who make life difficult for us and justify the saying, "It is better to live in the forest where fierce tigers roam, than in the land ruled by a tyrant." But we should not take this as a general rule; it is, rather, an exception which proves the rule.

Hence, merely by renouncing one's family and children one doesn't qualify for *mukti*. This is what Sri Krishna teaches in the *Gita*. He who does so violates the laws of nature. He who forsakes society does so because he lacks strength. He who forsakes his family forsakes God.

Tayumanavar, the saint poet, regarded Pattinathar as the greatest among ascetics. And what does Pattinathar say?

'Greater than one who creates Shastras is he who renounces his family and greater than he a million times

is one who has achieved renunciation in the mind..."

Pattinathar said this as he was a *sannyasi*. I say: achieving of renunciation in the mind is right and proper, abandoning one's home is a great sin.

What is *papa* (sin)? What is *punya* (virtue)? That act which causes harm to oneself or to others is sinful; that act which gives joy to oneself or to others is meritorious.

There is no act which can cause greater harm to one than renouncing one's home.

"With a wife at home, there is nothing that one lacks."—Loving one's faithful wife, and leading with her a life of dharma, is like enjoying heaven on earth. One's home is one's best dwelling place; not some mountain. One who is unable to see God in one's own house cannot discover Him in some cave near a mountain top.

Where is God? He is everywhere. He is not present on the mountain alone, He is present in your home, too.

Tayumanavar sang:

"Suka, whose limbs embodied You, called out.
From every side You answered,
Yes, here. Yes, here."

The sage Suka, eager to see God face to face, ran through the forest in ecstasy shouting, "God, O God!" Then, everything around—mountain, spring, cloud, river, canal, tree, plants, creeper, leaf, flower, bird, animal—answered, "Yes, here, here I am."

God is omnipresent. This story illustrates the Vedic doctrine '*Sarvamidam Brahma*'—the whole world is God.

This being so, which is better?—staying at home helping one's relations and other people in the world, enjoying worldly pleasures, yet ceaselessly meditating on God and thereby attaining *mukti*; or going to the forest, inflicting hardships on the body, falling a prey to the wild animals and trying to find God in the midst of all this?

Going to a forest or a mountain cave in search of God is like searching for the sun inside one's briefcase. "No better dharma than the householder's life," as the saying goes.

Tayumanavar says in one of his songs that both sannyasa and family life are equally good as paths for attaining *moksha*.

It was some latter-day saints who went round saying that the pleasures of worldly life lead to sorrows and nothing else. Under the mistaken notion that merely by leaving one's wife and children one renounces the world, they roamed from place to place, having no shelter or companions, subsisting on alms. The life that these people lead is miserable. Occasionally one comes across a true saint among these, a person who is well learned, devout and full of compassion. Most of them do have a desire for *mukti*. But it cannot be said that even the greatest of them ever attained wholeness, a wholeness unattainable by ordinary mortals.

In Vedic times there was no sannyasa among Hindus. (Yet) Vivekananda says otherwise. Vasishtha, Vamadeva and the other sages of the Vedic period were all married and lived happily with their wives and children. With a view to attaining control over the senses, the *rishis* did observe celibacy, undergo long periods of

penance. But, after a while they always came back into the family fold. The stories about *rishis* as contained in the *Mahabharata* and the other Puranas invariably confirm this view. As for Vivekananda, his acquaintance was mainly with the Upanishads, which are an adjunct of the Vedas. These Upanishads were called Vedanta, that is, the conclusion of the Vedas. They were written not by the Vedic *rishis*, but by people who came later. *Samhitas* are the real Vedas, they are the roots of Hindu religion. It is in them that the principles enunciated by Vasishtha, Vamadeva and others are contained. The Upanishads do not run counter to the Vedas, but are texts affirming the Vedas.

The *Samhitas* are written in old Sanskrit, while the Upanishads are in later-day Sanskrit.

Some later-day commentators, in their ignorance, referred to the Vedas as *Karma Kanda* and to the Upanishads as *Jnana Kanda*. That is, they accorded a higher place to the Upanishads than the Vedas.

Even Sayanacharya, whose commentary on the Vedas has the approval of the orthodox among Hindus, refers to the Vedas as a treatise on karma. He and others equated karma with *yagnas* and assumed that the Vedas were texts used in the performance of *yagnas*.

The *yagnas* were sacrificial ceremonies wherein cows, horses and goats were sacrificed. Then, Buddha arrived on the scene. He and the kings who became followers of Buddhism looked down upon ritualist Hindus who were adherents of animal sacrifices, and Hinduism fell into disrepute. Then came Sankaracharya. Incorporating some of the tenets of Buddhism into Hinduism, he rejuvenated and re-established

the Hindu religion. On account of this some of his detractors called him *Prachchhanna Bouddha* or crypto-Buddhist. But most Hindus hailed him as an avatar of Siva come to revitalize the Hindu dharma.

There is only one gain to us from Buddhism. It was Buddhism which confirmed, expanded and developed the practice of idol worship already prevalent amongst the Hindus. Inspired by the excellent statues of men made by the Buddhists, the Hindus, on the same pattern, created similar statues for their gods. Erecting statues for gods and offering worship to these is one of the important pathways to *mukti*. But one must offer worship with real *bhakti*.

Now, the great harm done by Buddhism was reviving the later cult of *maya*. In the Upanishads and Vedas, the word '*maya*' denotes Parasakti, the Supreme Power. But in the intermediary period many argued that '*maya*' meant illusion. Hence followed arguments that the world was false; Devas were false; air, fire, earth, water and sky were false; the five senses were false; the mind was false; *chaitanya* (awareness) was the sole reality. This school of thought held that the duties of the world were all to be repudiated, its pleasures renounced.

But these men only pretend to renounce all pleasures; they do not actually do so. It is not possible, in fact, for any living being on this earth to renounce all pleasures. It is possible to discard one's responsibilities; it is also easy. Many people, I feel, have taken to sannyasa so as to enjoy the pleasures of idleness.

These people have discarded their responsibilities, but not their pleasures. Have they discarded food?

If you say that without food one can't live, then one must work in order to keep alive. They have not discarded the pleasures of wearing clothes. They have not discarded the pleasures of sleep. They have not discarded the pleasure of education. They have not discarded the pleasure of living. They have not discarded the pleasure of arguing. Their leaders, the chiefs of mutts, have not discarded the pleasure of wealth. The *Bhagavad Gita* was written to destroy the false Vedanta of these people. The basis of the *Gita* is the genuine Vedanta which says: 'The universe is pervaded by God.' *Maya* is not falsehood. Falsehood never manifests. But *maya* changes; change is the law of nature. *Maya* is God's divine body. Evil is here in order to be overcome and destroyed. Good is to be accomplished and attained. You can attain yoga through surrender to God, through unceasing, unchanging *bhakti*. Consider all living beings as equal, then you will attain freedom. Through *satya-vrata* (fidelity to truth) you will attain bliss. Through purity in household life you will attain godhead.

This is the great truth which the *Gita* teaches.

—K.S.S.

STORIES:

(21)

ELEPHANT FOOT—FALSE FEARS

There was a fruit-seller whose legs were swollen with elephantiasis. Some boys used to frequent the street where he kept his shop, and whenever they passed that way they felt a desire to take some fruit away. But should they go near, he would show them his elephantine leg and ominously tell them: "Off with you, fellows! I will kick you if you so much as touch the basket!" The boys would run away in fear saying to themselves, "A kick with an ordinary leg we know is bad enough, one with such an elephantine leg would kill us."

Days passed by. One day when the shopkeeper was absently looking away, a boy stole near and made bold to snatch a fruit from the basket. Hardly had he done it when the shopkeeper turned round and saw him. Lifting his huge leg with some effort he gave the boy a kick. The urchin got a fluffy impact as though a cotton pillow had been flung at him. With roaring laughter he called out to his mates at the street corner—"Hey, come on, all of you! It is mere skin and flesh, no bone!"

All men appear to behave like children in many such matters. Have we not seen those people driven to distraction by seeing afar hardships that are 'mere flesh' and mistaking them to be 'with bones?' Why, haven't we been ourselves so driven?

—N.B.

(22)

THE POET AND THE BLACKSMITH

A poet who had attained great fame all over Europe was once passing by a smithy, when he heard somebody singing. He stood and listened. It was the smith inside who was singing. The song had been composed by the poet. The smith was mincing and maiming and changing the words and singing out of rhythm in most arbitrary fashion. Anger seized the composer who rushed in and started throwing the smith's tools and other articles helter-skelter, causing great confusion.

The smith asked indignantly—"Who are you, madcap, messing up my things and ruining my work?"

"Why are you bothered?" retorted the composer.

"Why! That is my property, mister, my life and livelihood!" exclaimed the smith.

Said the composer: "Just so, my work to me. I am the one who composed that song which you were singing. You made a complete mess of it. That is my life and livelihood. Learn your songs correctly, and do not murder a song."

—N.B.

(23)

DARKNESS

In the city of Vidyanagar there reigned long ago a king by name Dridha Chitta. Some of his kinsfolk conspired against him and managed one day to abduct him when he was asleep and carry him off to a nearby hill tract where they cast him into a cave and closed it with a large boulder. They had thrust into his nose the juice of some herb which kept him in a swoon all this while.

After a long time, the effect of the herb waned away; when the king came to senses, he realised his predicament—he was lying, limbs tied, in utter darkness.

'Where am I?'

He could not know.

'Who could have done me this harm?'

He thought and thought but was none the wiser. He tried to stand up. He could not.

Thirst scorched his throat. His eyes rolled in a daze. The heart pounded dreadfully.

"O God! You have decided to kill me—have you?" he shouted.

"Yes," said a voice.

"You say yes! Who are you?"

"I am Kaala—Time. I have come to take your life," replied the voice.

Then Dridha Chitta said: "I am in the prime of life. I have no desire or intention to go with you,

leaving behind me my intelligent and loving wife, the lion cub of a son and my kingdom rich and famous. You may go."

Laughter rang out from the voice.

"When would I be taken away?" he asked.

"In the small hours before sunrise," said the voice.

Dridha Chitta felt suddenly demoralised.

The eyes rolled more and more in a daze. His heart pounded faster. Legs began to tremble.

Then he remembered a mantram (magic formula) which his mother used to chant. Forthwith he uttered it. His mother had passed on to him the mantram at her deathbed; she had pronounced it in his ears and told him—"My son, whatsoever danger may befall you, it will disappear on uttering this mantram." That mantram he uttered now.

"Karomi"—"I do"—was the mantram.

"Karomi, Karomi, Karomi"—he said thrice.

A snake crawled out and bit him in the leg.

"Mother, is *this* all the fruit of your mantram?" he cried.

"Be not daunted, utter the mantram, utter the mantram, utter the mantram," arose a voice. As he heard these words, the voice sounded much like his mother's.

"Kuru, Kuru, Kuru", (do, do, do) said the bodiless voice.

On that he drew a deep breath and with a superhuman force jerked out his hands. The bonds that had bound his arms snapped asunder. He drew his sword.

"Do, do, do," said the voice again. He cut off with one stroke the snake-bitten toes. "Do, do, do",

he heard again. He tore off a piece of cloth from his dress, rubbed it on the soil on the ground and bandaged with it the amputated part of his feet to stop the blood flowing.

Again the voice was there—"do."

He cut the bonds and fetters with the sword.

At that point his body was overcome by fatigue. He fell down tired. Fever gripped him. He felt a deathly thirst.

"Oh! I can't bear this thirst. What shall I do?" he moaned.

"Chant the mantram," said the voice.

"Karomi, Karomi, Karomi", re-chanted he the mother's mantram.

"Do"— came the order.

"Do what?"

"Do not tire. Do indeed" said the voice.

"What should I do?" he asked again.

"Hit the boulder with your head," was the order.

He got up and dashed his head against the boulder covering the cave. He did it, daring to die, if he should, with his head broken.

The head did not break.

They who had covered the cave had in their hurry placed the boulder perched on a slope. It slipped and fell aside.

He came out and looked around. The sun had risen. "Karomi, Karomi, Karomi"—I do, I do, I do—chanting the mantram he made his way back to his capital.

Thenceforth there were no more enemies for him.

—N.B.

(24)

ARJUNA'S DOUBT

It was Hastinapura. The Pandava princes and Duryodhana and his brothers were studying under their guru Drona. Once when they were all enjoying an evening walk, Arjuna asked of Karna, "Tell me, Karna, which is better, war or peace?" (This is an episode occurring in the *Mahabharata*; it is authentic and no mere fancy).

"Peace of course," replied Karna.

"How do you say so?" queried Arjuna.

Said Karna: "Look, Arjuna. If it is war, I shall hit you. You will not bear it. And I am soft-hearted and cannot bear to see you in pain. So it will be unbearable for both. Therefore it is peace that is good."

Arjuna: "Look, Karna, I did not ask about the two of us. I am asking, in general; is war good or peace?"

"I have no interest in discussing generalities."

Arjuna resolved in his mind that the fellow should be finished off some day.

Then Arjuna asked Drona the same question.

"War is good." said Drona.

"On what grounds?" Arjuna asked.

Then Drona said: "Arjuna, my boy, in war you acquire money, you acquire fame, or you achieve death. In peace you are never sure; everything is unpredictable,

unreliable, uncertain—un-un-un!"

Then Arjuna went to Bhishma. "Is war good, or peace?" he asked. The ancient one, the son of Ganga, said: "Arjuna, child, peace is good. In war, there is glory for us *Kshatriyas*; in peace, glory is for the whole world."

"What you say, Sir, cannot be justified," said Arjuna.

"State the reasoning first," said the old sire, "and then state the conclusion".

"Grandsire, in peace it appears as though Karna is superior and I am inferior. If there is war, the truth will come out."

Bhishma spoke: "Child, dharma always overcomes. Whether by war or by peace, dharma that is righteousness will certainly triumph. Therefore leave aside all the anger in your heart and seek peace. All human beings are as brothers to you. Men and women should be mutually affectionate, loving. Love is the key mantram. I said it, I say it and I shall say it—Love is the key mantram."

A few days later, Vyasa the sage arrived in Hastinapura. Arjuna approached him and asked him

whether war was good or peace. Vyasa replied: "Both are good. It depends on the circumstances."

Years passed. The Pandavas, now in exile, were sending Sri Krishna as their messenger for talks with Duryodhana.

Then Arjuna asked Krishna: "Is war good, or peace?

Can you guess what Krishna said?

"Right now, peace is good. Isn't that why I am proceeding to Hastinapura on a mission of peace?"

That is what Krishna is reported to have said!

—N.B.

Swadesamitran, June 16, 1917

NOTES AND COMMENTS:

(25)

AMRITA BAZAAR PATRIKA'S INDISCRETION

We feel sorry at having to censure *Amrita Bazaar Patrika* of Calcutta, generally renowned for its patriotism and good sense. But even in the case of one's own brother, it is not proper to keep hidden any of his failings. Hence, when the much esteemed *Amrita Bazaar Patrika* makes a slip, it becomes our duty to point it out. Writing about the death of Lady Curzon last week, this paper says that Lord Curzon, by losing his wife at such a young age, has received his just punishment from God for having caused so much hardship to the people of India. Now, isn't this an undignified thing to say? A person may be our enemy, but when he loses his wife or is struck by similar tragedy, it would be cowardice on our part to feel happy over the event. Punish Lord Curzon by all means for his misdeeds. Do criticise the British government for their failing to punish him (for harassing us) and instead, rewarding him. But, to say childishly, "O Lord Curzon! you caused me trouble, that's why you lost your wife", is very unbecoming of a prestigious paper like *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*. A true journalist would sympathise with his enemy when the latter is struck by tragedy, and not gloat over it.

K.S.S.

India, July 28, 1906

(26)

ASIA'S RE-AWAKENING AND INDIA'S DUTY

The sun rises in the east. The east receives and enjoys the bounty of his youth. After a long time he reaches the west, stays there for a short while and then disappears. Before his disappearance in the west there is a certain glow. But it is nothing compared to the glow of the rising sun...

* * * *

(Likewise) civilisation, *jnana,* fame and glory dawned in the east (Asia). Then, evening came and everything got dim for a while. Asia lost her glory. Asians began to sink into barbarism. India, which was a bright jewel in Asia's crown, became a dependent country. China fell asleep. Arabia, Palestine and other holy lands lay exhausted. Westerners, saying that easterners were lazy and uncivilized people, felt pleased.

Dawn

New civilisation, fame, valour and glory have again dawned in Asia.

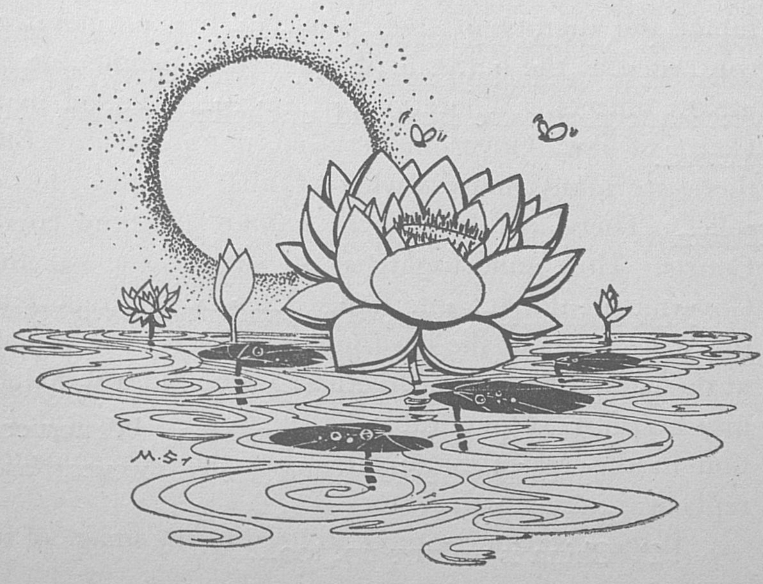
1) Japan woke up first, stood up, and laughed aloud a courageous laughter. Westerners who thought it would sleep forever, are surprised.
2) China is waking up, too...

New India

India is undergoing rapid changes. Since we are living here we cannot realise the magnitude of these changes. Well, it is good, we need not feel satisfied now, time enough for it. Our people, in hundreds, should visit not only western countries but also countries like China and Japan. Not merely youngsters but older people too, should visit these countries. They should learn at first hand what these countries are doing to achieve progress. We should then, with God as our witness, do our best for the benefit of our country. There are indications that all this will come about soon.

—K.S.S.

India, September 8, 1906



(27)

UNRESTRAINED PUBLIC SERVANTS

It is rarely that our countrymen venture to make complaints against Government servants. They are patient and long suffering by nature, and would not all of a sudden bring charges against officers. Hence when they do, it is surprising that the Government choses to ignore these charges...

...When the public make complaints against officers who are paid from public funds, the Governor and others are making a grave mistake in ignoring these complaints. If the Governor does not provide justice in such a simple matter, he is failing in his duty. These men in authority seem to be more worried about keeping intact the dignity of their officers; they do not feel concerned at the harassment suffered by people due to useless officers. Where redress can be obtained in a Court of law, Government need not interfere. But there are many matters where Courts can provide no relief. There are people who cannot afford to go to Courts. How unfortunate if in such cases too the Government doesn't interfere? There was a report in the *Standard* about the harassment suffered by a woman at the hands of a European officer in the Madras maternity hospital. Honourable Krishnan Nair put a question in the Assembly on this. But the Government's reply was very unsatisfactory...

If the government pays no heed to the image of its

officers, its own image will suffer. We are not worried about anyone's image. Our only purpose in writing all this is that people should not be made to suffer because of irresponsible officers.

—K.S.S.

India, December 1, 1906

(28)

HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY

It is heartening to learn about the steps being taken in Calcutta for unity among Hindus and Muslims.

A few books printed in the local language contain some matter offensive to Muslims. Some plays being staged there have also angered the Muslims. Invariably during festivals such as Bakrid and Dussehra clashes occur between Hindus and Muslims. So that the two communities may sink their differences and live together amicably, Muslims in a meeting have decided to seek an agreement with the Hindus.

In the meeting which took place last Sunday it has been decided that:

1) for the sake of unity we should work jointly with the Hindu leaders;
2) we should bring to the notice of Hindus things which we consider objectionable in books and plays, and arrive at a peaceful settlement.

These resolutions are extraordinary. If such efforts are made all over India it would be good.

Let differences perish, and let unity prevail.

—K.S.S.

India, July 10, 1909

(29)

THIS YEAR'S CONGRESS SESSION[1]

This year's (1909) Congress will most probably be held in Lahore...Sriyut Mohanlal Kantadas Gandhi Singh...has attended only one or two Congress sessions. He was born indeed in India but he has not resided here at all. Yet today who is there more deserving than he of the highest honour from the Indian people? In rallying men and women together for a cause and carrying it through, there is none equal to him. In conducting a movement keeping to constitutional means he is second to none. In the method of sublime protest, non-violent resistance, none can approach him. His recent speech in London on this subject has been lauded by one and all. What is required for uplifting a people he has brought out very well.

From the point of view of statesmanship too, an acute observer will see the widsom and importance of choosing Sriyut Gandhi as the President of the Congress

[1]The split between the Moderates and the Extremists in the Indian National Congress took place in the Surat Congress of 1907. As a follower of Tilak, Sri Aurobindo and V.O. Chidambaram, Bharati was a supporter of the Extremists. On the eve of the Lahore Congress in 1909 when the rift had not widened, Bharati wrote this editorial in his *India* (August 21, 1909) suggesting for the Presidency of the Lahore Congress the name of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (incorrectly mentioned in this editorial note possibly because his full name was not then known to many journalists in India).

session in Lahore this year. The Government of India has neither the power nor the will to help the Indians in Transvaal; and our Indian brothers in Transvaal, undergoing cruel miseries like the tortures of hell, have put great faith in the Indian National Congress as a rock of refuge and have appealed to them for help time and again. If we are to express our sympathy for their cause, if we wish to try and rid them of their hardships, we cannot better prove our intentions than by electing their great leader as President of our National Congress.

Sriyut Gandhi is a man of high capability, keen intellect; he has the gift of oratory and is one who speaks in a soft and sober style. For having taken up the method of Satyagraha he has been jailed thrice. The Transvaalers gave him all sorts of humiliating work and beat him up. They made him work in a convict's dress to lay gravel on the road, level it and draw a roller over it. They bound with chains his hands and feet and paraded him through the streets of Johannesburg. Against all this, what is that we ought to do him? The highest honour within our power, today, is the Presidency of our organisation that is the Indian National Congress. Let him have this decoration also, in addition to the honour of having gone to jail thrice. His speech will reveal to us the true plight of our unfortunate countrymen undergoing unjust and cruel sufferings abroad. We hope that both the sides—the Patriots and the Moderates—will accept this proposal.

—N.B.

India, August 21, 1909

(30)

THE GANDHI COW[1]

There is a well-known story in the Hindu *puranas*. A cow seized by a tiger in the forest appealed to her captor, "O Lord! There is a certain daily duty that I have not done yet; I have not fed my calf. I shall go and fulfil that duty and come back to you as your prey. Please permit me."

The tiger thought over it a long while and then, wanting to test the truthfulness of the cow, said, "All right. But come back as soon as the job is over."

Off went the cow. It fed her calf, entrusted it to the care of another cow, a friend of hers, and returned to the tiger, saying—"Thank you for letting me do my dharma. You may eat me now".

The tiger was wonder-struck and said: "O goddess of Truth, how can I eat you? Enough of my past sins, and no more."

[1]Barrister Gandhi's mission to London in 1909 on behalf of the South African Indians ended in failure. In the face of certain arrest, he returned to South Africa unlike other leaders who went into exile to carry on the fight from outside. As expected, he was arrested and jailed by the South African government. On this Bharati published a cartoon (reproduced in the next page) and this editorial note in *India*. A note under the cartoon read: "The cow called Sri Gandhi, having been to England to speak on behalf of her fellow Indian calves, is coming back to Transvaal to get imprisoned. The tigers of South Africa, ignorant of her greatness, put her in jail".

So saying, the penitent tiger fasted unto death.

The noble Gandhi behaved like this cow—but look at what the South African tigers are doing to him! Even a brute tiger was swayed by the flow of compassion in Hindustan; but, such South African humans who treat their Indian helpers more cruelly than the tiger,—such 'civilised' Englishmen—can be found only in this *Kali-yuga.*

—N.B.

India, December 18, 1909

The Gandhi Cow cartoon that appeared in *India,* 18-12-1909.

(31)

MR. GANDHI'S DISCOURSE[1]

A college student from Madras came to our shop this morning and he asked the 'Balance': "What is your opinion about Mr. Gandhi's discourse at the Y.M.C.A.?"[2]

The 'Balance' seemed amused and laughed saying "But, I do not understand Hindustani." The 'Balance' was only feigning ignorance, as it could very easily understand Hindustani but not English.

Then I said, "Y.M.C.A. refers to the Young Men's Christian Association. A few days ago Mr. Gandhi addressed this association. This gentleman is seeking your opinion about Mr. Gandhi's observations."

The 'Balance' nodded and turned to the student.

"Yes, what did Mr. Gandhi say?"

I intervened and appealed to the boy not to discuss politics.

The student said:

"Mr. Gandhi has established a Satyagraha Ashram at Ahmdabad, where he is training youths for national uplift. He has laid down certain rules to be observed by the inmates. In fact, it is his idea that all interested

[1]From 'Tarazu' (Balance), a personal column by Bharati in *Swadesamitran*.

[2]Gandhiji spoke on 'Ashram Vows' at Y.M.C.A., Madras, on February 16, 1916. For full text of Gandhiji's speech, *vide* "*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Volume 13, pp. 225-35.

in serving any public cause aimed at the welfare of all, must observe this code of conduct. It was about this that he spoke the other day at the Y.M.C.A. and Mr. Gandhi laid stress on eleven observances and they are:

1. Satya Vrata (The observance of Truth): One should always, under any circumstance and with anybody speak the truth like Prahlada.

2. Ahimsa Vrata (The observance of non-killing and non-injury): One should never do any harm to any being; one should never have ill-will towards anybody, and one should not hit back even if one is hit.

3. Brahmacharya (The observance of celibacy): One should not marry; and if already married must treat the wife as a sister.

4. Control of the tongue or palate: In food, spices must be avoided. It is wrong to eat food to satisfy your taste. It tends to increase the heat and excite your sexual desire.

5. Non-possession: One should not consider any object as one's property.

6. Swadeshi: We should encourage our native industries—our village, our district and our national industries. For instance, even if our village or town barber does not do an expert job, we should not call an outside-barber.

7. Fearlessness: One should have an absolutely fearless heart. Only one endowed with such a heart is a Brahmin.

8. Touchability: It is a sin to isolate some as untouchables. It is a grave danger too. All castes are touchables only.

9. National language: The medium of instruc-

tion in all branches of education should be the national language only.

10. Dignity of labour: All work has the same value. It is wrong to consider some work less dignified than another.

11. Devotion to God: Those engaged in public work and in politics should be endowed with devotion to God.

This is the substance of our Mr. Gandhi's talk."

The 'Balance' heard all this and said:

"Mr. Gandhi is a good man. The four observances of truthfulness, ahimsa, non-possession and fearlessness, which he advocates, are superior virtues and must be practised by all to the extent possible. But it is wrong to say that I should not hit back, when another hits me.

Swadeshi, equality of castes and abolition of untouchability, training in national language and devotion to God should be practised forthwith without any delay. Otherwise, this country will perish.

Control of palate and brahmacharya are good for the rich, if observed occasionally. It is not necessary for the poor. They have their tongues already tied. Mr. Gandhi does not advocate brahmacharya for the whole nation, as otherwise there will be nobody left in the country.

Mr. Gandhi has advocated eleven observances. I shall add one more—'Acquire wealth by ceaseless effort and attain an exalted place in this world.' The entire nation should observe this twelfth rule.

—M.S.

Swadesamitran [1916]

(32)

HINDU DHARMA

Come friends, this is the best time to spread Hindu dharma in Europe and America. Ah, if only we had ten persons like Swami Vivekananda now, we could have unfurled the victory flag of Hindu dharma all over the world within a year. Some may object to this, saying that when those continents are caught in the cyclone of war none would care for Hindu dharma. But no. War time is the best time for us. Only at a time like this would men realise the pettiness of man's ego and the greatness of God. Unless we acquire worldly pleasures through dharma, the result would be misery. Each one has to reap the consequences of his own karma. Good deeds beget good, and evil deeds evil. If today we possess hundred submarines and destroy another's ships, tomorrow another nation with thousand submarines will come and destroy our fleet. Enmity begets enmity. If we try to enslave others, someone will come along to enslave us too.

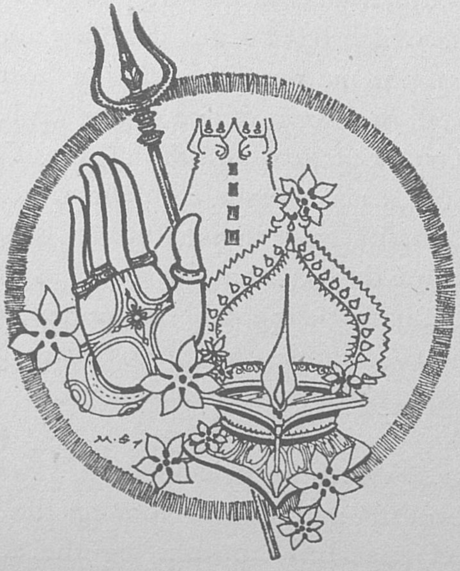
Whatever we do in this world should be done unselfishly, for the benefit of the community at large. A feverish existence, full of ceaseless desire, hurry and tension, cannot make for true civilisation. Peace is the basis for genuine civilisation. Tanks and submarines do not constitute civilisation. Coal mines and celestial missiles do not constitute progress. They are not sources of strength to man, they do not provide him companion-

ship. They are enemies of man. They are capable of annihilating man and his civilisation.

Pride leads to death. Patience and kindness alone will lead to real civilisation, eternal life. To propagate this and hundreds of other tenets of Hindu dharma throughout the world this is the best time. We are the only nation who can show humanity the right path and save it from destruction. If you open your eyes and survey the whole globe you will realise the truth of my words. I request our kings, zamindars and chettiars (businessmen) to ponder over this and send hundreds of preachers to foreign countries.

—K.S.S.

Swadesamitran, November 29, 1917



(33)

"SWADESAMITRAN" AND TAMIL NADU

Many friends—some in person and some through letters—have been of late asking me a question. This question, in brief, is:

"What really is your stand on the non-co-operation movement? Though *Swadesamitran* is not directly opposing non-co-operation, the paper doesn't seem, inwardly, to be very pleased with it. This being so, was it proper for you, a patriot of long standing, to have joined this paper at this juncture?"

My reply to all these people is as follows. No one in Tamil Nadu is unaware of the fact that it is *Swadesamitran* alone which has been a steadfast and disciplined supporter of the nationalist cause in South India all along. Well, in respect of one of the resolutions passed at the recent Calcutta session of the Congress, the publisher of *Swadesamitran* is inclined to agree with senior nationalist leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal and C.R. Das when they say that the course of action suggested by the majority cannot be implemented right now. History shows various other paths for achieving independence apart from non-cooperation...

* * * *

In my own view, preaching of swadeshi ideals more vigorously and clearly among the people, and skilfully yet peacefully outplaying the enemy on the political chess board (and grabbing *swarajya* at the

right moment) are the two historically valid course of action. This way there will be no fears about people breaking the law or the authorities mowing down people with their machine guns. Other methods will certainly lead the country towards chaos...When there are clear, firm indications that God's grace and all other circumstances are favouring our attaining *swaraj*, why choose a chaotic path which will bring death and destruction to a large number of Indians? Since Mr. Gandhi and his followers are genuine well-wishers of the country, *Swadesamitran*, not wanting to hurt in any way "our own folk", has been supporting them as much as possible. At this moment *Swadesamitran* affords a good example of the dictum that if people who disagree with us happen to be genuine patriots, then we are bound to treat them with due respect. I feel sorry indeed that some of my friends, lacking common sense and foresight and particular only about Gandhi's new plan being implemented in full, are abusing the gentlemanly *Swadesamitran* in all manner of ways. When there are differences of opinion among patriots not about the ultimate goal but merely about the means towards that goal, it is wrong for them to immediately start suspecting and abusing each other...

Unless we get rid of this habit, the state of our nation being what it is, we may encounter a lot of obstacles in our common march towards freedom.

"Your path is yours; my path is mine, we stand united in regard to the objective of gaining *swaraj* for India. Hence we are committed to helping one another as much as possible. When we can't help one another let us keep quiet. But on no account shall we nurse

enmity towards one another, or abuse one another, or otherwise cause harm to each other." This feeling of mutual support should never diminish among patriots as a whole.

—K.S.S.

Swadesamitran, November 20, 1920

(34)

SOMERSAULT BY FRANCE

According to Reuter, the French government has decided to allow businessmen and industrialists from France to enter into trade agreements with Russia. So England's decision to trade with the Bolsheviks may also be ratified. The proprietor of *The Times* of London and other English leaders have spent much paper, ink and time in insisting that England should have no trade relations with Russia. They are merely trying to postpone the inevitable. Today, tomorrow or the day after, trading with Russia would become inescapable. Is Russia a small country? It is three-fourths the size of Europe. How long can one treat it as an outcaste? The conservative politicians in England are afraid that Russians may use such trade connections to spread their political doctrines in England. What is to be done? Just because the owner of *The Times* wants to prevent political ideas not in conformity with his own entering England, would the English people forgo for long the advantage of trading with a mighty country? As soon as the British government permits their people commencing trade relations with Russia, I expect the Indian government to grant similar permission to businessmen over here. If there be some who feel afraid that this may lead to spreading of Russian ideas in India, I want to reassure them that such fears are baseless. Even if Russian ideas do spread here, is

not the Publicity Department of Indian Government competent enough to counter that? Why should we be needlessly afraid?

Swadesamitran, December 2, 1920

—K.S.S.

(35)

DIFFERENT CESS RATES

If people who possess land in excess of a certain area are made to pay higher cess, then they, to get out of this, may start selling away small portions of their land to small farmers. Gradually this process may change the present situation where the entire land wealth is in the possession of a few and the workers on the farms are denied the fruits of their labours. Ownership of lands will pass more and more into the hands of *Adi Dravidas* and others. With this end in view, Col. Wedgewood has expressed an opinion that higher land-holdings should be subjected to heavier taxation. In India, we would like to settle the land ownership issue in a just manner. It would be unjust to impose a heavy tax on any particular section of the community. Robbery is bad, whether it is done by robbers or adherents of dharma. The path shown by Col. Wedgewood would ultimately lead to Leninist ideology....

Without robbing (anyone) thus, if the poor landless people are utilized in tasks for betterment and progress of the village, and in return, if we legislate that each one of them be provided with enough food, that will suffice. It will become clear to all that the government would not allow anyone to go hungry at any time. If only the fear of hunger is removed, how fast mankind can progress! When other countries see how India has eradicated hunger in a peaceful manner, they too

would follow this righteous path. For this, we need *swaraj*!

Swadesamitran, January 19, 1921

—K.S.S.

(36)

IRELAND AND INDIA

This time, it seems, Ireland has to be granted independence of a sort. Otherwise, America won't sit quietly, nor Canada. Colonies like Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, too, won't tolerate (inaction). England will find it difficult to lecture to France on freedom. England will lose face all over the world. England's enemies will be happy. Even if all this help was not available, Ireland itself won't be quiet if independence is not granted to it now. Readers are well aware of the activities indulged in by the Irish in Ireland, London and Manchester to press their demands and the inconvenience caused to Lloyd George on this account.

Considering all these pressures one might decide to grant independence to Ireland; but then, Sir James Greg who has recently emerged Chief Minister of North Ireland is already on the war path. If one were to concede the demand for separate electoral division for Ulster, then Irish independence loses all meaning. What an act will it be, cutting Ireland into two and then giving it *swaraj*!

* * *

In England, too, Lord Derby and others are talking seriously about drowning Lloyd George in the sea, because they are afraid that he might grant freedom to

Ireland.

Once the Conservatives desert him, Mr. Lloyd George has to jump into the Pacific Ocean!

While thus Mr. Lloyd George is caught in a dilemma over Ireland, we Indians too would like to convey to him, forcefully, a message.

That is, over many centuries you English have been keeping Ireland under your rule through force, and denying them freedom. Ireland is a small country which England can beat any day in a war.

Yet, due to pressure of world opinion—pressure of dharma—it has now become impossible for England to deny freedom any longer to the Irish.

Such being the case, when do you propose granting freedom to India, a country which practised Vedanta 5000 years back; which is even today a leader in the path of culture through Jagadish Chandra Bose and others; which has no equals on this earth in valour and other kingly attributes?

—K.S.S.

Swadesamitran, July 19, 1921

LETTERS:

(37)

LETTER TO HIS WIFE[1]

AUM

SRI KASI
HANUMAN GHAT
[*1901*]

Chellamma my Beloved,

Blessings to you. I received your loving letter. I am doing nothing that you should feel so apprehensive of. Visvanathan has caused this fear in you (it appears). I am one who never go on a wrong path. I will tell you about this in detail as and when we meet. I shall feel very happy if you take to studying Tamil well during such times of anxiety.

Your lover
C. SUBRAMANIA BHARATI

(From the original in Tamil)

[1]Bharati was nineteen when he wrote this letter in Tamil; his wife was twelve! He wrote it from his paternal aunt's house in Benares where he had gone alone for his college education after his father's demise. It appears some relation had carried to Chellamma, living far away from her husband, frightening reports as though Bharati had become involved in some terrorist movement and might eventually incur sentence of transportation (to the Andamans) or even death by hanging. On this well-wisher's advice, the terrified twelve-year old wrote to her husband: "If you love me, please come back."

(38)

LETTER TO BAL GANGADHAR TILAK[1]

THE "BALA BHARATA" OFFICE
TRIPLICANE
MADRAS
29th May, 1908

TO
SRIMAN B. G. TILAK, POONA

Dear Guruji,

I have received a letter from Pandit Krishnavarma asking us to open a Hindi class in Madras, under the auspices of the Chennai Jana Sangham. We have already opened a small class. I hope it will be fairly well-attended in due course of time. I shall report its progress, later on.

We have decided to hold a national Provincial Conference in Madras, on the lines marked out in the Calcutta Congress. What about the next Congress? What has become of our Nationalist Committee? Our Secretary Mr. Chidambaram is just now you know where. Please ask Mr. Kelkar to correspond with our Sangham about the matter.

Yours sincerely,
C. SUBRAMANIA BHARATI

(From the original in English)

[1]Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920); scholar and leader of the "extremist" party in the Indian National Congress.

(39)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To
The Editor,
"New India"

Mr. Tilak's letter to the *Mahratta*, reprinted in your issue of the 1st. instant is bound to have created an infinite variety of emotions in the minds of his friends and his foes, his detractors and admirers in the country. All the same, there is nothing new, nothing unexpected, nothing surprising in his words to us members of the Constitutional National Party, of which he is the accredited leader and spokesman. We have always been saying the same whenever there was any necessity to explain our attitude to the British Government in India. The reason why we were not incessantly proclaiming it from housetops, has been, to put it frankly, our unwillingness to please those whose one aim seemed to be to misrepresent us. And again, incessant explanations would hardly have left us any leisure for constructive propaganda. And God knows too that our revilers were too many and too noisy for us to attempt any explanations at all. In the face of the present European crisis, however, the Nationalist Party—every member of it—felt that our position should be made clear to England and her enemies, her proconsuls and her agents, her critics and her friends, her flatterers and her misleaders. And now, our leader has spoken for us all in

language unmistakable and clear, may I hope, even to those who hailed his release from six years' imprisonment with two special police stations placed on each side of his house in Poona.

I trust that England's chief representative in India and her responsible ministers at home are not ignorant of the tremendous influence which Mr. Tilak's name and his pronouncements wield over the hearts of his many thousands of followers in India. He has given all our thoughts, ideas and aspirations in a nut-shell. We want home rule. We advocate no violence. We shall always adopt peaceful and legal measures to achieve our object. In peace time, we shall be uncompromising critics of England's mistakes. But when trouble comes, we shall unhesitatingly stand by her and, if necessary, defend her against her enemies. And to those who may thoughtlessly persecute us in England's name, we shall say—"Oh ye of little wisdom, it may be in your power to temporarily injure us in petty ways. But you can never crush us. For we are lovers of Humanity and servants of God, of peace that shall endure for ever."

(From the original in English)

New India, September 4, 1914

(40)

LETTER TO PARALI SU. NELLAIAPPA PILLAI[1]

19th July, 1915

May Parasakti guard well Sri Nellaiappa Pillai who is like a younger brother to me.

Brother—I find your intellect blossoms month by month, day by day. I am sure that the lotus that is your mind will be irradiated by the inner Sun that is Awareness and all happiness will be yours.

As the mind melts and goes on expanding, the intellect burns brighter. The only way to increase our strength is to feel compassion for those who are weaker than we and strive hard so that they become our equals. There is no other way.

Ha! If only you had known Hindi, Marathi and such other Northern languages, if only you could see for yourself what wonderful modernity the journals in those languages have acquired, O what a benefit that would be for the Tamil land!

Let every breath of yours be Tamil and deem it your duty always to foster Tamil. But then newer and

[1]An author and publisher who was devoted to Bharati. In 1906 he and his brother Parali Su. Shanmuga Sundaram Pillai worked in the Swadeshi Navigation Company of V.O. Chidambaram Pillai. In 1909, Nellaiappa went to Pondicherry where he met Bharati and worked for some time as Assistant Editor of *India*. Later, he became one of the pioneers in bringing out low-priced publications in Tamil. He also published some of Bharati's books.

newer messages, newer and newer ideas, ever fresh truths and more and more novel felicities should go on enriching in Tamil!

In the Tamil land there is only one caste; its name is the Tamil caste; it is the eldest child of Aryan caste. Write this.

Write that man and woman are two aspects of one life-principle.

Write that neither of them is inferior to the other.

Write that he that belittles woman stabs his own eyes.

Write that he that shuts up woman puts out his own eyes.

Industries, industries—Call out and proclaim.

Proclaim that the barber who does his job well is superior in caste to him that mispronounces the Veda.

May trade and commerce flourish, May machines multiply!

May efforts mount ever higher!

May music, sculpture, engineering, the earth sciences, astronomy, the physical sciences—a thousand branches of all these—proliferate in Tamil land.

Proclaim this aloud.

Sing 'Sakti.........Sakti.........Sakti.........'

(Brother) Long may you live.

Yours

C. SUBRAMANIA BHARATI

(Original in Tamil)

(41)

LETTER TO C. VISVANATHAN

AUM SAKTI

C. SUBRAMANIA BHARATI PONDICHERRY

3rd August, 1918

May Parasakti be propitious to Sriman Visvanathan. I have your kind and loving letter. On reading it, I appreciated your attainment in English. It is proper indeed that you should consider me after our father the main support. It is Providence (so to say) or God's will that circumstances did not permit my looking after you personally. There is no use regretting it now. However, better times will come. I shall soon be able to discharge my duties by those like you. I am looking forward very eagerly to your coming over here to see me. Do come early.

Sister Sri Lakshmi had written to me asking for some money, when she was in Ettayapuram a few years ago. I had no money in hand at that time, so I could not send her anything. Since then, angry with me, she has not written me a word. I would request you to plead with her and prevail upon her to pardon me and to keep writing letters to me. I trust I can depend on you to prove the truth of the saying, "with a brother on one's side, one fears no foes".

[1]Bharati's younger brother who was then studying in a college in Trichinopoly

And do not henceforth write to me in English. Even if you write colloquial Tamil, I will be glad to read that. If you are unable to write even in incorrect Tamil, write in Sanskrit.

Tiruppayanam V. Ramaswami Ayyangar took from me (the MS. of the Tamil work) "Vinayaka *Stotram*" for printing. He has not sent it back. He had also told me that he would collect funds for printing "Panchali Sapatham" and send the amount to Madras. Please arrange to have it sent immediately to me at Pondicherry, if possible. Furthermore, please request him to finish the job of 'Vinayaka Stotram' early and despatch the books.

Don't be worrying about your health. Take milk often. Always boil the water you drink. Do not worry about anything else. Through patience and fearlessness man attains godhead on this earth. May Mahasakti bestow this state upon you.

Your loving brother
C. SUBRAMANIA BHARATI

(From the Tamil original)

(42)

LETTER TO A. RANGASWAMI AYYANGAR[1]

KADAYAM
17th December, 1918

To Sriman Rangaswami Ayyangar, namaskars. I reached here on the night of Sunday the 15th. I express my heartfelt thanks to you and the other friends for the earnest and persevering efforts you took for my release.

I also request you to convey my grateful thanks to Mrs. Annie Besant, Shri Mani Ayyar, Shri C. P. Ramaswami Ayyar and all your friends who took interest in the matter of my release.

Yours sincerely,
C. SUBRAMANIA BHARATI

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[1]A. Rangaswami Ayyangar, Editor of *Swadcsamitran*, a nationalist Tamil paper, was a principal figure in obtaining the release of Bharati when he was promptly gaoled in Cuddalore by the British Government on his stepping out of the French settlement Pondicherrry. ('Mani Ayyar' was Sir S. Subramania Ayyar, a Justice of the Madras High Court. As a result of the intervention of these leaders and their assurance that Bharati was no "terrorist", Deputy Inspector General Harrington met Bharati in Cuddalore Jail and he was released. He reached Kadayam on the 15th and wrote this letter of thanks within two days).

(43)

LETTER TO PARALI SU. NELLAIAPPA PILLAI

KADAYAM
21st December, 1918

Namaskars to Sriman Nellaiappa Pillai.

I have reached Kadayam after a comfortable journey. On the day after my arrival, I received letters from many asking for *Paappaa Paattu*, *Murasu*, *Naattu Paattu* and *Kannan Paattu.* I have no stock with me. If you have, I request you to despatch as many books as possible.

I don't know what is the progress on printing "Panchali Sapatham" both parts together. I have given an agreement in writing to the Government that, for some time from now on, I shall show the books I shall publish to the Deputy Inspector General and obtain his permission. Now *Panchali Sapatham* (Part I) is a book already published and the present publisher is you and not I; so I feel it is not necessary to apply the agreement to the present case. But then there is nothing wrong in doing so either. The work is faultless. Deputy Inspector General Mr. Harrington is a very kind friend, a gem of a man. He would not obstruct our work raising needless objections. You may yourself show him the work and obtain permission.

If *Paappaa Paattu*, etc., are out of stock with you,

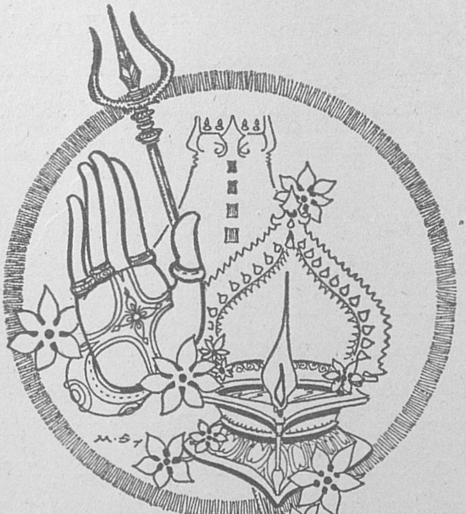
too, it is urgent to re-print and publish them over again.

May *Mahasakti* bestow immortality upon you.

Yours lovingly,

(Original in Tamil)

C. SUBRAMANIA BHARATI



ENGLISH WRITINGS

The following twelve articles are among the select writings of Bharati in English, from the compilation Agni and Other Poems & Essays *edited by C. Visvanathan, brother of the poet.*

(44)

RASA—THE KEY-WORD OF INDIAN CULTURE

Rasa primarily means essence, juice, taste, water, blood, elixir, beauty, sentiment—these are a few among the score of meanings given to this word by the Sanskrit dictionaries....

All life is Rasa. Our ancient writers reduce all forms of experience, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual, into nine Rasas—Love, Mirth, Compassion, Heroism, Wrath, Fear, Repugnance, Wonder, and Peace. But they say that all these are one, *au fond*. As moonlight is reflected variously by the clear spring and the muddy pond, by the moon-stone and the pile of bricks, so does one and the same Rasa manifest itself variously under various conditions in the human mind.

What is Rasa, then?

It is the form of Sakti, the feminine aspect of the Supreme Being. For God is two-fold—Being and Energy, Masculine and Feminine, Absolute and Relative, Purusha and Sakti.

In the unity of these two aspects, Existence becomes. And in the manifestations of Sakti, Existence moves and acts. It is eternal, this play, *leela*, of Siva, the Being, and Sakti, His Energy. And the wise ones say that She is ever a virgin, ever pure and ever of a marvellous and immortal beauty, this Sakti of God.

And, man, what art thou?

Thou art a centre of this play, the one amongst

the countless, the now in the midst of the ever.

God is in thee, in the innermost depth of thy being, watching and silently enjoying the beauty of this Sakti's perennial dance and ceaseless music—sad or joyful, aggressive or shrinking, madly passionate or sublimely calm.

Thou art nothing, O man, but enchanted Being, and His ever-enchanting, ever-beloved Energy. Siva-Sakti is thy name—even as it is the name of all things.

Now the nature of this Sakti is Rasa. It is juicy, tasteful and beauteous, infinitely and for ever.

This is the basic theory of Indian culture, the fundamental justification of India's arts and her literature, her aspirations and achievements, her life and her actions.

And, today, her Renaissance means her return to this fundamental doctrine of life.

* * *

Commonweal

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VERNACULARS

I do not blame the Madras "Council of Indian Education" for their anxiety to have Prof. Geddes' views on the subject of employing Indian languages as the media of instruction in Indian schools. For I am aware that men's thoughts are ordinarily moulded by their environments. Nor do I blame the good and learned Prof. Geddes for his innocent comparison of the revival of Indian languages with the Gaelic revival in Wales and in Ireland. I do not know if Gaelic has any extensive and living literature. But I feel it is high time to remind all parties concerned in discussions like this, that most of the Indian languages have great, historic and living literatures. Of course their lustre has been slightly dimmed by economic conditions during these later days. The English-educated minority in this country can be pardoned for being frightfully ignorant of the higher phases of our national literatures: but they will do well to drop that annoying attitude of patronage and condescension when writing and talking about our languages. The Tamil language, for instance, has a living philosophical and poetical literature that is far grander, to my mind, than that of the "vernacular" of England.

For the matter of that, I do not think that any modern vernacular of Europe can boast of works like the *Kural* of Valluvar, the *Ramayana* of Kamban

and the *Silappadhikaram* (Anklet Epic) of Ilango. And it may not be irrelevant to add that I have read and appreciated the exquisite beauties of Shelley and of Victor Hugo in the original English and French "vernaculars" and of Goethe in English translations.

New India, March 5, 1915

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IMMORTALITY

...Man can make himself immortal here on earth by making his personality one with the Soul of the Universe. This unification can be achieved by the ceaseless exercise of Will. Collect all the life-streams and thought-streams in thy being, making them all into a mighty river. Let this mighty river ever flow towards the Truth. And the Truth shall make thee immortal.

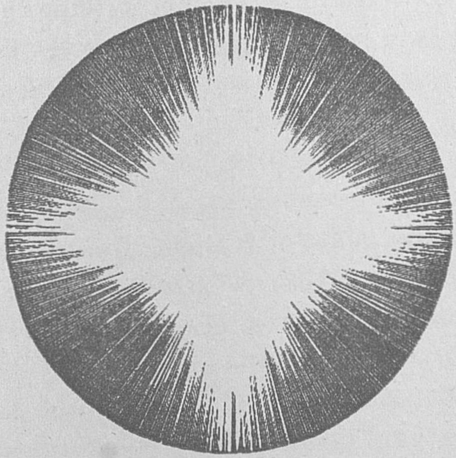
* * *

Deep in the heart of Nature, there is an unending flow of harmony. Whoso drinks of this harmony attains to immortality. Trees, stars and clouds, the ripples on the stream and the fair maids of Brindaban—they all melt into one joy of life when the notes of the Divine Flute are heard. The voice of immortality shall make thee realise that thou art one with the dawn and the night, the stars and the pebbles. And yet it is this realisation that a man must have before ever he can hear the voice of immortality.

Self-surrender is the supreme condition of winning the universal life. Men will part with their wealth, their rights, and even their lives, at the call of religion. But when you ask them to exhange their human self for the divine self, which is exactly what all great religions want them to do, they refuse. For the wine of

mortality has a terrible fascination for most of us—and yet by flinging myself into the blazing fire of universal Reality, I do not lose myself. I emerge out of the ordeal, shining and deathless. Brothers and sisters, come, let us strive to become immortals by losing ourselves in the Supreme Light.

New India, April 23, 1915



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WOMEN'S FREEDOM

Ages ago, in Vedic times, our nation had produced women like Maitreyi and Gargi, who were able to take part in the discussions and debates of the highest thinkers of the land. But, today, what is woman's status in our country? There is no use shrinking from strong language when we have to deal with terrible facts. Our women today are slaves. I am quite aware that we still retain something of the old idea that the mother must be looked upon as a goddess by her children. But every woman is a wife before she is a mother; and the position of the wife, with us, is that of a petted slave—more slave than pet; she must not speak to strangers; in the North she is not supposed to see men, except the prescribed ones....

The situation is nauseating. We are men—that is to say, thinking beings. Our chief work in this world is the understanding and glorification of God's ways and not the enslaving of God's creatures. If any man or nation forgets this, that man or nation is doomed to perdition.

The slave and the slave-driver are equally unhappy, equally accursed. It staggers me to think how humanity has managed so far to be even partially blind to this central, essential, most shining truth of God's world. But I feel it as a special shame that we Indians, with our magnificent Vedas and Upanishads, should still

be giving sacred names to despicable forms of slavery.

I am anxious that responsible men throughout the country should give the most serious consideration to this question of woman's status in India and do something immediately to make Indian womanhood free, enlightened and really human, that is to say, divine.

Commonweal, April 30, 1915

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THE PLACE OF WOMAN

Civilisation is the taming down of man by woman. Men, indeed, have till now been trying, with scant success, to civilise one another by means of the sword and the bullet, the prison-cell, the gibbet and the rack. But it has been the lot of woman to have no other weapon than fables, parables and symbols in her work of civilising man.

* * *

Where woman comes, comes Art. And what is Art, if not the effort of humanity towards divinity?

There is a saying in Sanskrit: "Grihini Griham Uchyate" (Home is but a synonym for wife).

Nor is it without significance that the country of spiritual liberation, India, should, at this hour of her mighty awakening, have adopted as her most potent spell, the words "Vande Mataram", i.e., "I salute the Mother". That means that the first work of a regenerated India will be to place the Mother, i.e., womankind, on the pedestal of spiritual superiority. Others speak of their Fatherlands. To us, the Nation is represented by the word "Mata".

* * *

Nations are made of homes. And so long as you do not have justice and equality fully practised at home, you cannot expect to see them practised in your public life. Because it is the home life that is the basis of public life. And a man who is a villain at home cannot find himself suddenly transformed into a saint the moment he gets to the Councils or to "Courts of Justice".

* * *

And the spirit of Hinduism, pre-eminently among the religions of the world, has ever been to help woman in rising to her true position in human society. It has been a long and painful struggle. The progress has been tragically slow here, as elsewhere. But at this hour, when the sages of India have stepped forth to guide the soul of mankind, the ascent of woman to her proper place in society has become imminent and inevitable.

Commonweal

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MATRI-PUJA

(Mother-worship)

God the Father is the Ideal. God the Mother is the actual. That I am one with Pure Being is a spiritual realization. That I am one with the manifested world is an actual, every-day experience. Indeed, ultimately, the Ideal is the same as the actual; but we, children of earth, find in the motherhood of God a dearer relation, a sweeter rapport. Nor need we erect shrines for her worship, nor invent symbols. She is there, standing before us; ever-shining, ever-beautiful. She stands revealed as Nature.

In the light of the sun, in the music of the winds, in the soft ray of the star, and the rage of a storm, in the loves and hates, fears and hopes, dreams and deeds of men and women, in the subtlety of a thought and the majesty of a volcano—in these and in all things we behold the mother of our worship. The land of one's birth and the human mother that nourished one in her womb are natural and concentrated symbols of this all-making Goddess. Womanhood itself is a sublimer representation.

Our ancestors were great apostles of this Mother worship. Para-Sakti, supreme energy, is the name whereby they knew her. In the dark ages of our history, this worship of the supreme energy began to be

misunderstood and misrepresented by its votaries. Has not the same thing been done with the Veda? The wheel of time throws all things down and again all things aloft. Mother-worship will save humanity, for the supreme energy renders immortal all that reflects her beauty and her fire.

From *Agni and Other Poems & Essays*

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PATRIOTISM AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

* * *

True, patriotism must be spiritual, but that does not mean that differences of belief concerning the nature of the other world should be brought into the theatre of secular nation-building.

Of course, we must have our religious disputes. Religion is the one thing where conformity is more dangerous than in any other. But, in the service of the Motherland, we are all of one creed and one religion, one caste and one colour, one aim and one ideal. In the temple of the Mother, whoever enters is holy.

New India, May 18, 1915

(51)

THE COMING AGE

From the beginning of history the higher human will has been consistently striving to bring about perfect fellowship, or at least mutual harmlessness, among human beings. The poets of the race have sung of it, prophets have preached it, and even legislators have often pretended to work for it. But the construction of human society could only appeal to the intellects and emotions of a few classes, who had to be content with regarding the higher teachings as ideal counsels which yet could never be made practical in ordinary human life. So the Will of Man, aspiring towards the heights, has ever been defeated by the old animal custom of treating human life as a theatre of "competition" —that is to say, mutual injury and endless strife for securing physical necessities and luxuries. Competition is said to be the declared rule of life among animals, but human "civilisation" has aggravated that evil principle into such terrible forms that we are worse than the lower animals in certain respects. There are plenty of crows in the town where I am living. But I find that the crows do not fight each other a thousandth part so badly as men have ever been and are doing, for food and shelter.

What the Westerners call socialism is not clearly understood here. But still for the West as well as the East, there is only one decent way of livng, viz., to

make the earth common property and live on it as fellow-workers and co-partners. We have a tradition that, in the Krita-yuga, men lived like that in this country. That may or may not be true. But human will shall yet succeed in bringing about that Krita-yuga in all countries and in not a far-off future. The higher Will of man has been baulked till now because for some reason or other it could not direct the main part of its energy towards rectifying the root of all our social ills. Justice must be made to triumph in the very formation of human society. And then she will naturally triumph in all human affairs and relations. So long as the principle of competition holds sway over the structure of human associations, so long as land and water do not belong commonly to all human beings, men are bound to behave worse than brutes in their "economic" relations at any rate. They are fools who think that the sages had no knowledge of political economy. The Rishis were wise not merely in their teachings about the other world, as certain people imagine, they were equally wise in their teachings about this world. When the majority of men realise this fact fully, we shall have taken the next step in our upward evolution.

New India, May 21, 1915

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THE SIDDHA AND THE SUPERMAN

Names are images. Carlyle has spoken to us of the profound poetry lying hidden in all nomenclature. Meditate, for a moment, on any important and vital word of a people's language and it will reveal to your mind something of the modes of thought, something of the historic reminiscences and of the spiritual aspirations of that people. For instance, a certain school of Western thought has evolved the term 'Superman'. Nature has made us men. "Let us," says this school, "strive to become more than men;"—whereas we in India have our Siddha, meaning the "Perfected man".

The Siddha does not worship the "will to power", for he knows that power is merely one of the many things necessary for a perfect life and therefore can never be a supreme end in itself.

He worships the will pure and simple—the Sakti of God. The Will of the Universe, the All-Will, the Will not merely for Power but for Being and Loving, that Will should, in full measure, be realised by man in himself if he seeks perfection.

I wonder if the Western school above referred to has, in any of its treatises, described fully and systematically the methods to be adopted for acquiring the will to power. But here, in India, we have a yogic literature which in spite of many interpolations and mediaeval accretions, still contains the most scientific

and rational treatment of the question of consciously accelerating human evolution. By Will is this Universe made. By Will is this Universe maintained in motion and activity. By Will does thought become manifested in material forms. By Will does life stand.

The Siddha realises that the will in him forms part of this All-Will. A conscious realization of this fact tends to make the individual more and more ablaze with the divine fire, more and more assured of immortality and invincibility.

And the Siddha adores the All-Will, day and night. He meditates on it in his moments of silence, he makes it the theme of his songs, his motto, his battle-cry, the awakener of his faculties and the sustainer of his actions.

Teacher or King, vowed celibate or father of a large and prosperous family, poet or soldier— whatever may be the role of life that the Siddha has chosen to play, it will be sanctified by the Will Divine and shine with the lustre of immortality.

But in all that he may do, his heart will ever be free from the taint of self-aggrandisement, of harm, or indifference to the interests of other beings. If sometimes his duty impels him to impose a severe correction on obstinate evil-doers, he does so with love in his heart, hidden, perhaps, but very real.

Above all, the Siddha is a democrat. Equality is to him a matter of utter reality, as he has seen the basic unity of all beings.

Where Nietzsche's 'Superman' would talk of the 'hero', the Siddha speaks of the children of God, the living rays of the universal sun.

Heroism and 'Supermanism' are, by certain people, wrongly identified with the pursuit of war and kingly domination, exclusively. The Siddha, of course, is a hero; for heroism is one of the conditions of human perfection. But, he need not necessarily be a War Lord. The Shastras tell us that there are four types of the hero—the Hero of War (the Yuddha-vira), the Hero of Sacrifice (Dana-vira), the Hero of Duty (Dharma-vira), and the Hero of Compassion (Daya-vira). He may be anyone of the four.

Firmly established in *mauna* (the silence internal), fearless of death, disease, and the devil, serene in the strength of God, and happy in the knowledge of immortality, resplendent in his energy, irresistible in his action, tireless in labour, and full-souled in service, the Siddha lives amidst men, a representative of the will Divine, a veritable messenger from Heaven, protector of men—loving, elevating, immortalising.

Commonweal, June 18, 1915

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ANDAL[1]

(The Vaishnava Poetess)

Preoccupied from the earliest times with divine knowledge and religious aspirations, the Indian mind has turned all forms of human life and emotion and all phenomena of the universe into symbols and means by which the embodied soul may strive after and grasp the Supreme. Indian devotion has especially seized upon the most intimate human relations and made them stepping stones to the superhuman. God the guru, God the master, God the friend, God the mother, God the child, God the self, each of these experiences—for to us these are more than mere ideas—it has carried to its extreme possibilities. But none of them has it pursued, embraced, sung with a more exultant passion of intimate realisation than the yearning for God the Lover, God the Beloved. It would seem as if this passionate human symbol were the natural culminating point for the mounting flame of the soul's devotion: for it is found wherever that devotion has entered into the most secret shrine of the inner temple. We meet it in Islamic poetry; certain experiences of the Christian mystic repeat the forms and images with which we are familiar in the East, but usually with a

[1]Pronounced 'Aandaal'

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certain timorousness foreign to the Eastern temperament. For the devotee who has once had this intense experience, it is that which admits the most profound and hidden mystery of the universe; for him the heart has the key of the last secret.

The work of a great Bengali poet has recently reintroduced this idea to the European mind, which has so much lost memory of its old religious traditions as to welcome and wonder at it as a novel form of mystic self-expression. On the contrary, it is ancient enough, like all things natural and eternal in the human soul. In Bengal a whole period of national poetry has been dominated by this single strain and it has inspired a religion and a philosophy.

And in Vaishnavism of the far South, in the songs of the Tamil Alwars we find it again in another form giving a powerful and original turn to the images of our old classic poetry; for there it has been sung out by the rapt heart of a woman to the heart of the universe. The Tamil word 'Alwar' means one who has drowned, lost himself, in the sea of the Divine Being. Among these canonised saints of Southern Vaishnavism ranks Vishnuchitta, a yogin and poet of Villipattam in the land of the Pandyas. He is termed Periyalwar, the Great Alwar. A tradition, which we need not believe, places him in the ninety-eighth year of the Kali Yuga. But these divine singers are ancient enough, since they precede the great saint and philosopher Ramanuja whose personality and teachings were the last flower of the long-growing Vaishnava tradition. Since his time, southern Vaishnavism has been a fixed creed and a system rather than a creator of new

spiritual greatness.

The poetess Andal was the foster-daughter of Vishnuchitta, found by him, it is said, a new-born child under the sacred *tulsi* plant. We know little of Andal except what we can gather from a few legends, some of them richly beautiful and symbolic. Most of Vishnuchitta's poems have the infancy and boyhood of Krishna for their subject. Andal, brought up in that atmosphere, cast into the mould of her life what her foster-father had sung in inspired hymns. Her own poetry—we may suppose that she passed early into the Light towards which she yearned, for it is small in bulk—is entirely occupied with her passion for the Divine Being. It is said that she went through a symbolic marriage with Sri Ranganatha, Vishnu in His temple at Srirangam, and disappeared into the image of her Lord. This tradition probably conceals some actual facts, for Andal's marriage with the Lord is still celebrated annually with considerable pomp and ceremony.

Arya, July 15, 1915

(54)

INDIA AND THE WAR

Call it fatalism or what you will, we, in India, have always thought and still think that the destinies of all things here on earth are controlled by superior forces of whose nature man has yet known but little. The affairs of cawing crows and of "civilised nations", of cats and of "supermen", are all determined by divine laws—the laws of those whom we call the immortals. The diplomats and statesmen of the world think that they themselves decide the fates of nations. we think that the diplomats and statesmen are wrong. All beings are instruments of the Divine Will and act for ends which they can never fully comprehend. We know this and we are therefore possessed with a sense of humility and diffidence when we want to understand the real objects for which the gods have sent this grim and terrible tragedy into the fair and prosperous land of Europe. Our hearts are deeply touched when we think of the immense amount of suffering and anguish which this war has brought to European humanity. We have a special love for Europe, in spite of her blunders and faults; for she has done some very good things for mankind.

Why we love Europe

Within her own realms she has fought noble battles against superstition and injustice. She has used her

best talents for unravelling the mysteries of God's physical world. She has been bold in her inquiries, courageous in her convictions and high-souled in her aspirations. Mankind is fundamentally one. Of course there are some silly theorists and sillier rhymesters in Europe, as here, who have been pleased to divide mankind into hearts which "shall never meet", but the true seers have everywhere proclaimed the unity of the human race. And whatever mental or moral victories Europe may have won for herself, she has won for the whole of humanity also. We therefore love Europe and we earnestly hope that she will soon be permitted by the gods to return to the normal ways of life. Her pain moves our hearts. May she soon have peace!

Why we are friendly to the cause of the Allies?

Even the soul which recognises and is ever willing to submit to the inscrutable dispensations of the higher powers may have its own convictions, its own sympathies, its own choice. And from whatever philosophical height one may choose to survey the momentous struggle now going on in Europe, one cannot help taking sides unless one ceases to be human. The thing is so grand, so terrible, so tragic, so human. It is a pity that men should have to die like this. But the laws are inexorable. Certain ideas have got to triumph, certain principles have got to be realised among men. And man generally learns new lessons at a frightful cost. In Europe, today, the allies maintain that they fight for international equity, for the rights of nations and individuals; while the Germans say that they are fighting, among other things, for the maintenance and advance-

ment of their culture.

They even speak of Germanising the world. I am willing to admit that on the side of the allies also there are certain people whose love for liberty and equity is of very recent origin—the principal advisers of the Tsar, for instance. But still there remains the fact that their war-cry is: "each nation for itself", while the other side lays more stress on imposing German culture on the rest of us. There is no use in thinking about past incidents. In the past everyone has been wrong, in Asia as well as in Europe. We must forgive the past. There remains no doubt, however, that in the present war the right is with the Allies. And we in India—all of us who count for anything—being passionate lovers of the cause of freedom, we pray that the side which will guarantee the freedom of nations, which will demolish once for all the stupid doctrine that "Might is Right", which will establish a permanent and universal system of international equity and mutual respect—that side should win. This is the reason why India is so willing to sacrifice her men and resources towards aiding England and her allies. England, we are pleased to find, is full of genuine gratitude for all that we are doing for her at present, though some of her agents here persist in clinging to the old follies and superstition. But these men do not count for much; England will never forget India's generosity and magnanimity. She will not disappoint the civilised world by denying her present ideals when the war shall be over.

[July 1915]

(55)

POLITICAL EVOLUTION IN THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY[1]

...About ten years ago, it was usual among the few Madrasi Nationalists to lay much stress on the epithet "benighted" as applied to Madras in view of the stolid resistance offered by Madras moderatism to all ingress of the new nationalist doctrines...

Thus, in the City of Madras and other important towns of the Presidency, the new Nationalist movement was held in check by the moderate forces when Bengal and the Maharashtra were plunging headlong into it. It was only among the Tamil reading middle classes, merchants, landlords, elementary school teachers, petty traders, lawyers, clerks, etc., as well as a large section of the Tamil-reading ladies that the new political movement gained much support and adhesion owing, chiefly, to the labours of the Tamil journals, *Swadesamitran* and *India*...

Meanwhile, when the first bomb ever used by Indian terrorists was thrown, by sheer mistake, on a European lady, Mrs. Kennedy by name, it made Anglo-India almost desperate with rage. And, indeed,

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[1]Bharati wrote this in English as a survey of political events from the partition of Bengal (1905) down to 1918. This was in manuscript form with his brother Mr. C. Visvanathan and was published in the second edition of Bharati's English works brought out by him in March 1980. Only excerpts are reproduced here.

what a pity it was! What a commentary on the re-awakened sense of Rajput chivalry in the heart of New India! What a woeful mistake! A bomb thrown at a woman for freeing India! And yet the deepest cult of the Indian spiritual consciousness is one that calls upon us to revere every woman, of whatever caste, colour or country she might be, as a direct manifestation, or, to put it more correctly, the most direct manifestation of the Divine Mother of the Universe, known to Hindu philosophy as "Adi Sakti", Primordial Force, the Divine Feminine. And India with her age-long sense of the aesthetics of life, sometimes miscalled superstition, at once declared: "Now, this is an inauspicious beginning. This movement will not thrive in my land. And some of the revolutionaries, too,—ay, even the very leader of the first batch of Bengali terrorists, Mr Barindra Kumar Ghose, brother of the famous Aurobindo Ghose, expressed his intense regret at that time that the first bomb should have struck down a woman. He and his brother-workers, being of the emotional type themselves, could not but feel that mistake as a bad omen.

By the way, it is interesting to note that this same Barindra Kumar Ghose is now living in Calcutta, a free citizen, after serving a long term of imprisonment in the Andamans, in connection with the said inauspicious bomb. Since his release from the Andamans, his ideas seem to have developed into the very reverse of what they formerly were...

...He has given up the bomb cult, entirely believes, with his illustrious brother, in a coming spiritual change in the nation's mind whereby India will be

rendered mighty in every department of human life, political or other, by methods and processes non-political, non-military, non-aggressive and purely spiritual and, at the same time, abrupt, sudden and dramatic. What exactly those methods and processes were and how they were going to find application on a national scale, have not yet been made clear to the public by either of the brothers. But, I fancy, the above is quite sufficient to indicate that the Bengali terrorist movement which suddenly raised its head in 1908 and caused many dangerous and unfortunate upheavals and splits in the political life of India has now become as much a matter of ancient history as the continent called Atlantis.

The few later bombs of the Bengali terrorists and the fewer bombs handled by their Mahratta and other imitators, being mostly tentative and hypothetical bombs, did not burst, they were often not responsible for so much as a scratch on the victim's body. The bazaar people laughed as they heard of these bombs. But to the Police or a considerable section of it, especially among the C.I.D. men, this offered too tempting an opportunity for misrepresentations of a profitable character and they began to act in a manner which, while it proved many things about the policemen themselves, also proved that the Britishers in India were so far from being identified with the Indian people that they could most easily be led to believe in any of the most impossible misrepresentations made against the latter by hireling informers and worse folk. For the moment, the minds of the British rulers of India were possessed by a strange and hypnotic fear expressed in the vague

terms: 'the incomprehensible East'. From fear to severity is hardly a step. Soon the Government started a policy of represssion and terror in almost every province of India, they penalised the whole country for the too elaborately confessed sins of Barindra Kumar and his handful of Russianised fellow-conspirators in Bengal. Nationalist speakers and nationalist journals were prosecuted and subjected to severe punishment everywhere, even in benighted Madras...

...How wise it would have been on the part of the British authorities at that period if they had adopted a policy of clearsightedness, of justice, and of humanity! ...The officials of the Madras Presidency, especially, with whom we are most concerned here, began to feel furiously and act precipitately. To think that these Indians—whether they be Madrasis or Bengalis does not make a difference—that these men should renounce their usual role of tax-paying and low-salaaming and presume—to rebel! And, as the average official of the Madras Presidency began to query himself: "What is happening to these 'mild Hindus'? Where are their traditional smile, salaam and servility? What is this new demon which seems to have taken possession of them? Why have they suddenly become so insolent, so impudent? Bombs for us, indeed, and no garlands this time. We will teach these monkeys a lesson which they will keep fresh in their memory for the next two centuries!" And forth goes the fiat: Repress! imprison, deport, hang! The immediate result, of course, was what alone could be expected—the people were dumbfounded by terror. Peace, of course, was established; peace of a kind. But concord

had gone. All sorts of instinctive and atavistic racial fears and animosities were brought to the surface. The petty and miserable attempts at a school-boys' rebellion was crushed out utterly. But this insignificant result was reached at a tremendous cost!

In the Madras Presidency, as in other Provinces, the Nationalist speakers and the Nationalist press were very roughly dealt with. ...Added to this was the fright produced in the public mind of the Presidency, by the ruthlessly repressive policy and measures adopted by the governments of the other provinces. All this resulted or tended to result in the level-headed people of Madras dropping the new nationalistic creed as a piece of hot coal touched unwittingly...

...The people, on the one hand, terrified by the sudden phenomenon of reckless repression and, on the other, coaxed by the sweet blandishments of prosperous moderatism as signally exemplified as well as sonorously expounded by leaders like Mr. V. Krishnaswami Iyer, soon turned pronouncedly moderate in their political views, aspirations and activities and the loyalist flag floated very high in the air.

The "Ashe Murder Case"

It was at this favourable juncture of affairs that an unfortunate 'incident' (or should I say 'accident'—for the like of it never once recurred in our province) occurred, in the southernmost district of India, at the Maniachi Railway Station. Mr. Ashe, Collector of Tinnevelly, was shot dead by an Indian, Vanchi Iyer. Now this was a tragedy which, quite apart from its terrible political consequences, had pathetic traits

from the social and human points of view also. Collector Mr Ashe of Tinnevelly who was travelling with none but his wife in his company, was taking a pleasure trip or a health trip to Kodaikanal, a famous sanatorium situated in the adjacent District of Madura. Again, an outrage to the Hindu religion; for the murdered man had his wife by his side. They were a young and, to all appearance, a loving couple. They were having a pleasure trip in each other's company. A scene like that would very profoundly appeal to the heart of the devout Hindu.

The Lord Siva, the Supreme God of Good, is reported by the Hindu seers as being half Himself and His other half, His consort. Siva is God; His consort in Hindu theology signifies His active Energy literally known as Para-Sakti or Supreme Energy in the Hindu scriptures. Man and wife, when found together, form objects of worship to every Hindu, because they most really represent the Heaven state. And Hinduism is quite right. For, let a man and a woman but sincerely love each other and you will find them a very edifying and solemn spectacle while in each other's company. They will irradiate the whole atmosphere with love. Now let us turn from the pathetic to the tragic in the story. A few minutes after killing the Collector, Vanchi Iyer, after successfully intimidating those who attempted to arrest him, committed suicide by shooting himself dead. It is due to the credit of the Madras Presidency to state immediately that a second incident of this character has not occurred since then till now. The terrorist movement in the Madras Presidency was still-born. But the suicide of Vanchi

Iyer had an unfortunate effect on the public life of this province. It left the police without a clue as to the actual accomplices of Vanchi Iyer. The officials, of course, wanted a sacrifice to be started in the regular Eastern fashion—and the police, the Indian Police, made the sacrifice very elaborate indeed, considering the number of victims, the extent of the field of operations, the amount of money spent and so on, right through the whole analogy of the Hindu yagna. Arrested certain people must be, that is the initial process in this affair. But the police did not quite know whom to arrest. So they said to themselves something to the following effect:—Let us arrest the whole population of this Tinnevelly district and then the actual accomplices, prompters and helpers, and it is certain there are lots and lots of them, are bound to get into their midst unerringly. But there was an unexpected trouble which upset the police argument completely. And that is, they could not arrest the population of an entire district. Bah! were they to be foiled by such a trifle as that? They threw logic into the sea and determined as a measure wherein justice and expediency are sweetly combined, to arrest as many people in the district as possible...

...The police[1] were daily sending reports—imagine about two hundred men solely engaged in collecting information and supplying daily reports about the exiles in Pondicherry, who, after all did not count more than five or six. You may be sure that, under such

[1]The British Government in India were permitted by the French Government to maintain a police force of about 200 at Pondicherry, capital of French India, for an indefinite period.

circumstances the said suspects, of whom I had the honour of being one, were watched and reported upon a good deal too much. Endless were the mischiefs played by the policemen, unbearable to the political refugees — men like Mr. Aurobindo Ghose whose spiritual realisations were greatly hampered by the extraordinarily hard conditions brought upon them by police activities. Imagine 200 policemen, constituting a fatly financed department by themselves, spending all their time in writing reports against you, stopping your letters and money orders, setting up rogues to rob your house or to make nocturnal attacks upon your homes in organised bands, concocting cases of conspiracy and murder against you, carefully, elaborately and circumstantially, thus bringing you to trial in the French courts:—trials which cost you much money and anxiety and which might have brought you most serious trouble but for the keen sense of justice on the part of certain French magistrates.

...To spread rumours that you were going to be kidnapped from Pondicherry and taken forcibly into British India in a motor-car or again to start wild tales about the entire cession of Pondicherry into British hands, just for the fun of putting these political suspects into the furnace!

Note, also that, with the exception of Aurobindo Ghose, the rest of us had warrants aginst us in British India in connection with the Ashe Murder Case—and a price of thousand rupees each was placed on our heads...

Meanwhile, the War had been making great changes in the public mind. The earlier reverses

of the Allied arms produced a most unfortunate effect on the mind of the Indian masses. It was at this juncture that Mrs. Besant, through her paper *New India*, appealed fervently not only to the people of the Madras Presidency but also to the people of India in general to fight for freedom from the alien rule.

Mrs. Besant is now reputed to be a Moderate of Moderates and is earning a great name for abusing Mr. Gandhi more tirelessly than anyone else. But, in those days when the War was going on in Europe and the Indian mind was afire with new ideas and aspirations, Mrs. Besant, while she stood resolutely on the side of the British Empire so far as the European struggle was concerned, wrote very strong things in favour of Indian liberty and against those who stood in the way of its realization. Suddenly a storm arose in the southern province, a great and wild storm of patriotism.

(To be continued)[1]

[1]Subramania Bharati did not live to complete this political survey. The preceding paragraph ends with a pregnant sentence about the oncoming Home Rule Movement which Mrs. Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak set into motion in 1917.

Photo opposite

Bearded Bharati with his wife Chellamma.
Photograph taken in Pondicherry in 1917.

—Courtesy : R. A. Padmanabhan

CHRONOLOGY

December 11, 1882 through September 12, 1921

1882

December 11 : Subramanian born in Ettayapuram in Tirunelveli District of the then Madras Province in South India—Father Chinnaswami Iyer was in the service of the local chieftain or zamindar.

1887

Mother Lakshmi Ammal dies; father re-marries.

1887-94

Primary education in Anglo-Vernacular School in Ettayapuram.

1892

Father starts a cotton ginning factory in Ettayapuram.

1893

Subramanian, or Subbayya as he was called, is awarded the title "Bharati" (embodiment of Saraswati, Goddess of Learning), in an assembly of local scholars and poets in recognition of his poetic genius.

1895

Closure of father's ginning factory owing to financial difficulties.

1895-98

Bharati studies in the Tirunelveli Hindu College High School.

1897

15th July: Marriage with Chellamma, aged 7, despite his protests against child marriage.

1898

Death of father; study discontinued.

1898-1901

Stay at Banaras in his paternal aunt's house. Passes Allahabad University Entrance Examination, and in the process masters Sanskrit, Hindi and English.

1901

Back to Ettayapuram at the invitation of the zamindar, who was return-

ing from Delhi after attending a durbar there held by Lord Curzon to celebrate King Edward VII's accession to the British throne.

1901-4

Service under the zamindar which ends in estrangement.

1904

August 1 to November 10: Serves as Tamil teacher in the Sethupathi High School in Madurai.

In November, joins popular Tamil dail paper *Swadesamitran* **as Sub-Editor at the invitation of its Editor, G. Subramania Iyer, who already knew Bharati as an occasional contributor to the** *Madras Standard* **(English weekly).**

1905

Engages himself in active politics. In December, attends Indian National Congress Session in Banaras. On his way back meets in Calcutta Sister Nivedita of the Ramakrishna Mission and accepts her as his spiritual mentor.

1907

Leaves "moderate" *Swadesamitran* **and becomes Editor of a new revolutionary Tamil weekly** *India,* **and of an English monthly journal** *Bala Bharata;* **also concurrent Editor of** *Chakravarthini,* **a Tamil monthly.**

In December, attends Surat Session of the Congress along with Nationalist delegates.

1908

The first part of *Swadesa Geethangal* **(Songs on Motherland) in Tamil is published in book form.**

The weekly journal *India* **attracts Government's surveillance in the wake of British Government's action against extremists.**

His arrest seems imminent. Bharati leaves for Pondicherry (then a French settlement) near Madras on the advice of friends where he is joined by his family soon thereafter.

His paper *India* **is also shifted to Pondicherry. So also** *Bala Bharata* **(English monthly),** *Vijaya* **(Tamil daily),** *Suryodayam* **(Tamil weekly),** *Karmayogi* **(Tamil monthly), which keep Bharati enthusiastic and busy writing on varied topics—art, culture, righteousness and spirituality, besides**

political reviews.

1909

The second part of his patriotic songs is published with the title *Janma Bhoomi*.

1910

Government bans circulation of the paper *India* in British India; hence its publication ceases along with other nationalist papers like *Vijaya*, *Bala Bharata*, etc.
In April, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, poet, patriot and philosopher from Bengal, arrives in Pondicherry, his "cave of penance". Other patriots like Subramania Siva and V.V.S. Iyer also seek refuge in Pondicherry. Bharati is greatly influenced by their company.

1910-18

Jobless and trying period for Bharati. But spiritual companionship of Sri Aurobindo and V.V.S. Iyer and dependable friends like Srinivasachari, Shanker Chetty and others sustains him. A period of intense literary labour: composes *Panchali Sapatham* Part I (1912) *Kuyil* and *The Fox with the Golden Tail* (1914) and *Kannan Pattu* (1917) and also writes a number of articles in Tamil and in English (the later for English journals *New India*, *Common Weal* and *Arya* and the daily *The Hindu*) besides short stories in Tamil and translations from Sanskrit.

1918

Leaves Pondicherry and returns to British India, arrested near border on November 20 and remanded to police custody for 24 days in Cuddalore sub-jail, but released conditionally on November 24 on the intervention of Annie Besant and Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer.

1918-20

Quiet life with family at Kadayam in Tirunelveli District, the birth-place of his wife. Marriage of his elder daughter Thangammal at Kadayam.

1919

In March, brief meeting with Mahatma Gandhi takes place in C. Rajagopalachari's residence at Madras.
Delivers lectures in English on philosophical topics in many gatherings in Madras city.

1920

In November, re-joins *Swadesamitran* as Assistant Editor.

1921

In August, caught and thrown down by the temple elephant while offering fruits to it at the temple in Triplicane, Madras. Rescued and rushed to hospital. Seems recovering but the shock has impaired his fragile body. Other complications set in. September 11: Struck down with dysentery and fever. Refuses to take medicine.

Passed away in the early hours of September 12, 1921.

A centenary publication sponsored by the Government of India